

Village Sermons;
OR,
SIXTEEN PLAIN AND SHORT
DISCOURSES
ON THE
Principal Doctrines of the Gospel;
INTENDED FOR THE USE OF
FAMILIES, SUNDAY-SCHOOLS,
OR
COMPANIES
ASSEMBLED FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION
IN
COUNTRY VILLAGES.

To which is added,
A GENERAL INDEX TO THE WHOLE WORK.

VOL. IV.

BY GEORGE BURDER.

The poor have the gospel preached unto them. Mat. ii. 4.

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PREFACE.

A DESIRE to encourage and facilitate the laudable practice of reading Sermons to the uninstructed poor in country villages, gave occasion to the publication of the first volume of these plain discourses: and the very favourable manner in which they were received by the public, induced the author to compose a second, and afterwards a third volume, of a similar kind. These also proving acceptable, he was desirous of perfecting the work, by the addition of sixteen sermons more, that those charitable persons who are in the habit of reading them in the villages, or the heads of families who read them at home, might be furnished with a complete set, or one sermon for every Sunday in the year.

Through the good hand of my God upon me, I have been spared to finish this work: and I desire to close it with my grateful acknowledgments to Him, for the facility and pleasure with which he has enabled me to perform it; for the kind encouragement I have received from many valuable ministers and friends to proceed with it; for the satisfaction I feel in reflecting, that, even in these degenerate days, there are thousands among us who respect the doctrines of the gospel, though presented to them in the simplest garb; for the intimation of some good already done by these sermons; and for the humble hope, that when the author can no longer employ his tongue or his pen for Christ, they may continue to be useful to the next generation.

To render this volume more generally serviceable, I have added some discourses on the Nativity of Christ—on his Death and Resurrection—and on the Descent of the Holy Spirit. In these I had a view to the edification of those Christians who think proper to notice such subjects at the seasons appropriated to them; for, in this matter I would be regulated by the advice of St. Paul—"He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it." In these sermons, I have endeavoured to suggest such hints as may tend to prevent the common abuse of *Holidays*, as they are called, and to
show

PREFACE.

show how they ought to be sanctified by those who observe them.

I thought it necessary also to add some sermons purely of a practical nature, (though I trust I have uniformly endeavoured to treat all the doctrines of grace practically). But I have given some discourses particularly on the Christian Temper and the Christian Walk; for I look upon holiness as an essential part of Christ's salvation, and apprehend that the dispositions and duties of believers deserve a place in our ministry, as well as the peculiar doctrines and privileges of the gospel. And I am sorry there should be any advocates for the truth who are so ill-informed, or so ill-disposed, as to wish to separate what God has joined, or to treat the faithful preaching of practical religion as "legal, low, or Arminian stuff." This is that evil long ago complained of by the great and good Dr. Owen. "This objection," saith he, "we must expect to meet at every turn. Men will not believe there is a consistency between God's effectual grace and our diligent obedience."—"A command, they suppose, bears no room for a promise; and a promise, they think, takes off the influencing authority of a command. If holiness be our duty, there is no room for grace; and if it be an effect of grace, there is no place for duty. But all these arguings are a fruit of the wisdom of the flesh; the wisdom that is from above teacheth us other things. It is true, that works and grace are opposed in the matter of justification; but our duty and God's grace are no where opposed in the matter of sanctification, for the one supposes the other. Neither can we perform our duty herein without the grace of God; nor does God give us his grace to any other end than that we may rightly perform our duty. He who denies either that God commands us to be holy in a way of duty, or promises to work holiness in us in a way of grace, may with as much modesty reject the whole Bible."

To the condescending blessing of the great Head of the Church, "the author and finisher of faith," these plain sermons are now committed. To Him, to the Father, and to the Holy Ghost, be glory in all the churches, world without end. Amen.

5 DE 60 GEORGE BURDER.

Coventry, January 1, 1800.

The Penitent Thief.

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S E R M O N,
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LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

WHO can read these words, or consider the conversion and pardon of the dying thief, without exclaiming, in the words of St. Paul—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" Here is a wonderful instance of divine, free, and sovereign grace, abounding towards the chief of sinners: It is recorded for the encouragement of great sinners in every age; that *they* may take refuge in Christ "who are ready to perish;" and it affords a pleasing proof that "he is able to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by him."

Our blessed Lord was crucified with two thieves, and placed between them, that he might be thought the worst of the three. But thus the scripture was fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors," or "criminals." The chief priests, the scribes, the rulers and the mob, all joined in mocking and deriding him; not content with beholding his extreme sufferings, they had the cruelty to add insult to his pains. "Come down from the cross," said they, "and then we will believe. Thou that didst save others, save thyself:" and "Save us too," said the thieves; not seriously, but by way of taunt; for, it is written, "the thieves also which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." O what an instance is this of the savage hardness of the human

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heart!

heart! how dreadful, that wicked men, dying in their sins, should strive to forget their own agonies, that they might join in abusing and insulting the Son of God. A state of more desperate and confirmed wickedness can hardly be conceived.

But behold the grace of God! One of these men is snatched as a brand from the fire; plucked, as in an instant, out of the very jaws of destruction. An astonishing, perhaps a sudden change is produced. He cries for mercy, and he obtains it. He looks to Jesus, and is saved. From being a hardened sinner, he becomes at once an eminent saint; obtains assurance of immediate bliss; and passes from the gallows to glory.

Let us now carefully consider the two parts of our text, into which it naturally divides itself,

I. The prayer of the dying malefactor.

II. The gracious answer of the Saviour.

In attending to the first, consider, for a moment, the character of the criminal, for a criminal he was; a malefactor; a highwayman; one who belonged to a desperate gang of robbers who infested that country; a set of seditious banditti, who were for shaking off the Roman yoke, and who lived by rapine and plunder. It is not improbable that he was a murderer also; for such men scruple not to kill as well as steal. This is the man who becomes the trophy of sovereign grace. For surely it will be admitted that here was no previous goodness or worthiness to recommend him to the divine favour.

Is it not astonishing to hear such a man as this suing for mercy? But what cannot grace effect, and that in a moment! He who in the first creation said, "Let there be light, and light there was," can, in an instant, dart a ray of spiritual light into the darkest mind. Whether any means were employed for the communication of this light or not, we cannot say. Some imagine he was first affected by the strange, total, supernatural darkness, which then suddenly

suddenly overspread the land—an emblem of the inward darkness which soon involved the sacred soul of our dear Redeemer; and a dismal presage of the dreadful ignorance and darkness which should cover the Jews; and which has covered them ever since. Possibly, the pathetic prayer of our Lord for his murderers first touched his heart—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." There was so much dignity, so much tenderness and mercy, in this, that perhaps it was the means in the hands of the Spirit, for melting the rock of ice in his bosom. Or, who can say whether, before this unhappy, or shall I say, now *happy* man, joined himself to the gang of thieves, whether he had not, now and then, mingled with the multitude who heard our Saviour's sermons, and saw his amazing miracles: and though his vices had long suppressed every good motion in his heart, yet now, in the time of his trouble, he calls to mind what he had before neglected. "For a grain of the divine word frequently falls on an uncultivated soil; so that it produces no fruit till many years after, when sufferings and afflictions cause it to spring up." And this may afford a ray of comfort to ministers and parents, encouraging them to hope, that though their prayers and instructions seem for the present to be lost, yet that, finally, "their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

Behold he prayeth! So it was observed of Saul, as a proof of his conversion. So we say, with wonder and surprize, of the thief—Behold he prayeth! Perhaps he never prayed before, or he had long forgot to pray. Had he prayed, he had not come to the cross; he had not been a thief; for, according to the Dutch proverb, "Praying will make a man leave sinning, or sinning will make a man leave praying." Now he prays; and, most wonderful! prays to him who hung upon a cross. He becomes a Christian at once, for a Christian is one who

"with the heart believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth maketh confession (of that faith) unto salvation." Rom. x. 10.

He calls Jesus LORD, which no man can do aright "but by the Holy Ghost." He gives him this title of dignity and authority, though degraded by the whole Jewish nation, and branded with the name of a rebel, a Samaritan, an impostor.

He owns him also as a *King*, for he begs to be remembered by Jesus "when he shall come into his kingdom." You know the title that Pilate put over his head on the cross was, *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*; and it was put there to intimate his crime, in assuming the character of King, in opposition to Cæsar: but he was really a king; he came into the world to be a king; to set up a new and spiritual kingdom in opposition, not to Cæsar, but to Satan; and this character he boldly avowed before Pilate. The penitent thief allows his claim, and begs to be admitted among his subjects. He understands also that "Christ's kingdom is not of this world," as the Jews foolishly thought the kingdom of Messiah was to be; and this was their fatal mistake; for, on this account, they rejected the humble Lord of glory. They despised his mean appearance; they saw "no form, nor any beauty, that they should regard him: despised, nor accounted in the number of men. He was despised, and they esteemed him not," Isa. liii. 2, 3. But the faith of the thief broke through the clouds which obscured his real dignity; and "beheld the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

He pays him the just honour of having heaven at his disposal, according to what our Lord afterwards declared, "I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell," or, rather, *the unseen world*, including both heaven and hell. Rev. i. 18. The dying thief
believed

believed this, and his prayer was the language of faith, a confidential address to the Saviour.

Observe also the *modesty* of his application. *Remember me*: not *prefer* me to honour in thy kingdom, as the two ambitious disciples had formerly requested; but simply, *remember me*; he does not dictate how, or in what manner, he leaves it all to the Lord; but he commits his cause, his soul, to Christ; and, no doubt, with some degree of that satisfaction, which St. Paul expressed in the view of death, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12. It was a request like that which Joseph made to the butler, (Gen. xl. 14.) "*think on me*, when it shall be well with thee; yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him." The poor thief succeeded better; he was remembered, and saved; for Jesus never said to any soul, "Seek me in vain." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

As the case of this man was singular and extraordinary, so he gave very singular and extraordinary proofs of his *sincerity*. The professions of repentance and faith, *first* made in the hour of distress and in the prospect of death, are often uncertain, and may justly be suspected. Too many who, in the expectation of death, have seemed to be much in earnest, and gave great hope to Christian friends of a real change, have proved, by their conduct when they recovered, that they were not sincere; for the vilest of men generally respect religion in their dying hours. But the penitent thief was enabled to give the most satisfactory evidence of sincerity; and the answer of Christ to him puts it beyond a doubt. Observe now the marks of his sincerity.

(1.) *He reproves sin* in his comrade, especially his sin in reviling Christ—"Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" Perse-

cutors of Christ, in his person, or in his members awfully prove their want of the fear of God: and every sin is greatly aggravated by that hardness of heart which persists in it, even in the time of fore affliction. True repentance will always occasion a sincere hatred to sin. True grace will ever make a man feel for others. The love of God and the love of man are always united. The true penitent will say with penitent David, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Ps. li. 13.

(2.) *He condemns himself*, and admits the justice of God and of the magistrate in bringing him to the fatal tree—we *suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds*—shameful and painful as our death is, it is no more than we deserve. A just sense of sin will make a sufferer patient. He will say, "against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest." Ps. ii. 4.

(3.) *He vindicates Christ*—"But this man hath done nothing amiss:" The Jewish courts had condemned him to death as the vilest of miscreants, and the whole multitude had cried, "Crucify him, crucify him;" but the thief, more honest and better taught than they, justifies his whole character; and truly says, "he hath done nothing amiss." Thus, in the face of all his infamous and powerful slanderers, he declares the innocence of Jesus, who was, indeed, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

Thus was clearly manifested the reality of that great and gracious change which had taken place in his heart. He was evidently enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; he was convinced of his sin and misery; he was humbled for it; he reproved sin in his neighbour; he honoured the character of Christ; he owned him as Lord, and King, and Saviour; and he

he commits his departing spirit into his faithful hands. What wonders of grace were crowded into this small place, enabling him, in a few minutes, to give more glory to Christ than many do in the whole course of their lives!

II. Let us now proceed to consider the gracious answer of our Saviour to his dying request. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*

Recollect, my friends, the situation of our Lord when he made this answer. Call to mind his personal sufferings at the moment. Behold him naked upon the cross. He that clothed the heavens with stars, the earth with flowers, and man with raiment, is despoiled of all his garments, and hangs exposed to the scorn of the rude mob. Great was the torment of crucifixion. First stretched and racked upon the cross, while it lay on the ground; then nailed to it, through the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet, with exquisite torture; the tree being elevated, is by a violent concussion settled in the ground; while every joint and sinew is painfully distended, and his whole weight borne by the wounded parts. But "the sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings." A sense of his Father's wrath, and the burthen of the sins of the world, now lay heavy upon his soul. Darkness, that might be felt, filled his holy mind, and in the agony of his spirit he cries aloud, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Remember, it was during this inexpressible grief, that the Lord of Life vouchsafes this gracious answer. Excessive pain or grief, usually prevent our care for others; but the agonies of our Saviour lessened not his compassion for the souls of men. From the moment of his last visit to Jerusalem, when "he wept over it," until he gave up the ghost, tender pity to sinful men vented itself in the most affectionate accents. Witness his parting discourse,
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and pathetic prayer after the passover. Witness his kind apology for his sleeping disciples. Witness his direction to the sympathizing females, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Witness his intercession for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And now, upon the first application of this poor abandoned sinner, he instantly complies with his request, and grants him "exceeding abundantly above all he could ask or think."

How readily does God regard the sinner's cry! With speed like that which winged the feet of the Prodigal's aged father, who no sooner beheld at a distance his long lost, but now returning son, but "while he was yet a great way off, had compassion, and ran, and fell upon his neck and kissed him." God is slow to anger, but quick to mercy; ready to forgive. He discerns the first motion of the soul heaven-ward, and while the sinner is "yet speaking" in prayer, the prayer is heard and answered.

Observe the substance of the answer—a place in paradise—Christ's company there—immediately, "to day;" and, the solemn assurance of the whole, "Verily, I say unto thee," it shall be so.

A place in *paradise* is promised; a place in *hell* was his desert, and would have been his portion, had he died in the same state he was half an hour before. Heaven is here called "Paradise;" in allusion to the garden of Eden, which the Lord God himself planted, and in which he put the man he had formed. By sin, Adam soon lost his garden and his God. "He drove out the man." By the first Adam Paradise is lost; by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, Paradise is regained; a far better Paradise; a garden, from whence the blessed inhabitant shall never be driven out. "Here grows the Rose of Sharon, and the Lilly of the valley. Here flourishes the Plant of renown; here the unforbidden tree of knowledge, and the unguarded tree of life." No
subtle

subtle serpent annoys this happy spot, any more to seduce; nor shall the free will of man betray him to ruin again.

Jesus promises to the penitent the enjoyment of *his own company there*—"this day thou shalt be *with me* in Paradise." Christ, then, was going, not to hell, to redeem the damned, as some have supposed, but to heaven; where he assures the thief he shall also be. It is the presence of Christ that makes heaven so glorious and happy. With this he consoled his mourning friends, John xiv. "I am going to prepare a place for you; and I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." Amazing favour, "to be with Christ!" this is enough. He asked a bare remembrance, as if distant; Jesus promises his own immediate presence.

And, *how quickly* was this to be enjoyed! "To-day." He had prayed—"Lord, remember me *when* thou comest into thy kingdom." He knew not when that might be; perhaps he thought of some very distant time. Christ says, "to-day." How short and speedy was this man's journey to glory! In the morning, he was posting to hell; in the evening, he is with Christ, in heaven. This scripture teaches us a pleasant truth, namely, that there is no interval, between the time of our departure from this world, by death, and our admission into the realms of glory. Some have dreamt that the soul sleeps till the resurrection; but Christ assures the thief, and assures *us* by the same word, of an immediate entrance into heaven; that so, being "absent from the body," we may be "present with the Lord."

Of all this, Jesus vouchsafes the most solemn assurance; he adds his usual asseveration "Verily." Perhaps he saw some rising doubts in the sinner's mind. The blessing promised was so vast and unexpected; he might feel so much his own vileness
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and unworthiness, as to fear he should not obtain it; but, to put the matter out of all doubt, Christ adds a kind of oath to his promise, that so this "heir of promise might have strong consolation." And is not the scripture full of similar assurances, "that whosoever believeth in Jesus, shall not perish, but have everlasting life;" yea, more: "he that believeth *hath*," even now, "hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "Wherefore then dost thou doubt, O thou of little faith?"

APPLICATION.

1. Beware of abusing this glorious instance of free grace. Many have been very cautious in speaking of it, and have rather laboured to obscure its glory, by studying to find out something good in the character of the thief, lest this example of grace, purely free, and granted at the last hour, should have a dangerous tendency, and encourage men to defer their repentance; presumptuously hoping to be saved at the last moment, like the thief. But a sober consideration of the matter may prevent this abuse; while we must take care to do nothing to diminish the glory of divine grace, in this instance so illustriously displayed. It has been often and justly observed, "We have but *one* such instance recorded in all the Bible: *one* sinner converted at the hour of death, that we may hope; and *but one*, that we may fear." And, suppose it had once happened that a person had leaped down from a lofty precipice without losing his life, would it be prudent for ten thousand other people to run the risk, and leap down after him? Dreadfully hazardous, indeed it is, for men to presume on a death-bed repentance. "Repentance is the gift of God;" he is bound to bestow it at no time; and can it be reasonably expected at the

the close of a life of sin and rebellion? Let it be considered how many die suddenly, without a moment's warning; how many die on their beds, who are so flattered by their disorder of their friends, that they have no expectation at all of death. Others die in the delirium of a fever; or are otherwise disabled by extreme agony or weakness for serious reflection. And some die hardened, like the other thief on the cross; for, in general, men die as they live.

But, behold and admire the grace of God! Salvation is always of grace. Surely it was so in this instance. Sin indeed abounded, but grace superabounded. Whoever is saved, must be saved on the very same terms as the thief was, "justified freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ;" "without money and without price;" "not of works, lest any man should boast." Boasting is always excluded in salvation, whoever is the subject of it. How eminently so here! *Who* was it that made one thief to differ from the other? Bishop Hall says, "Lord, he could not have spoken *this* to thee, but *by* thee. What possibility was there for a thief to think of thy kingdom without thy Spirit? That good Spirit of thine breathed upon *this* man, breathed *not* upon his fellow: their trade was alike; their state alike; their sin was alike; their cross alike; *only* thy mercy makes them *unlike*: One is taken, the other left. Blessed be thy *Mercy*, in taking one! Blessed be thy *Justice* in leaving the other! Who can despair of *that* mercy? who can but tremble at *that* justice?"

Let every sinner, who reads or hears this, know *he* needs mercy, just as much as this criminal. "But I am not a thief," says one. Perhaps you have not robbed *man*, but have you not "robbed *God*?" Have you not defrauded him of "the glory due to his name? Have you not robbed him of the Sabbath, a portion of time which he demands for
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his own service? Have you not embezzled his talents, which were given you to trade with, for the purposes of his honour, and your own salvation?" Boast not, then, that you "have paid every *man* his own," when you have, in a thousand instances, defrauded the blessed God of his due. See then the necessity of mercy, and dread the thought of a double condemnation, the one for *sin*, and the other for *unbelief*.

May the goodness of God, so divinely displayed in this instance, draw thee to repentance. Jesus Christ "came, to seek and to save that which was lost." This was always his character, and he maintained it to the last. His enemies reproached him for it; they called him "the friend of sinners;" so he was; but not the friend of sin. Blessed be his name, he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He casts out none that come. O come and try him. What encouragement is here for him "that is ready to perish;" who has a world of guilt, and not a grain of worthiness! Say, with the dying thief, "Lord, remember me, now thou art in thy kingdom," and he will find a place in Paradise for you, even for you.

This prayer will suit the Christian all his days, Lord, remember me. When guilt recurs; when temptations assault; when troubles arise; look to the Saviour. He who "remembered thee in thy low estate," will not forget thee now. Like the High Priest of old, he bears the names of all his people on his heart; and, though even a tender mother may forget her sucking child, yet he protests he will remember thee. In return, go thou and remember him.

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ON

LUKE xx. 35, 36.



But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: Neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

IT may justly excite our wonder and our grief, that believers, who are professed candidates for another world, should have their hearts so little set upon their heavenly home. The glory that shall be revealed, and which faith humbly expects, is so exceedingly great, that one should suppose the children of God would scarcely be able to think or speak of any thing else. But alas! it is not so. "Our soul cleaveth to the dust," and we have abundant cause to pray, "Quicken thou us, according to thy word." May the Lord bless our meditations on this passage of Scripture, in which Jesus Christ replies to the objections of the Sadducees against the doctrine of the resurrection! The Sadducees were the disciples of Sadoc, and composed one of the four sects of the Jews; their leading notion was, that "there is no resurrection;" ver. 27; they also denied the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, and a future state. The Sadducees thought to perplex the doctrine of the resurrection, by proposing the case of a woman who had been married to seven different men. "In the resurrection, said they, whose wife of them is she?" Our Lord mildly answered this impertinent question, by showing that there is a vast difference between the state of men on earth, and that of the children of God

in heaven; a great difference between this world, and that world. The whole passage is full of instruction, which we shall endeavour to obtain, by making several observations upon it.

Observe, I. There is another world.

Our Lord calls it *that* world: It is evidently opposed to "*this* world," ver. 34. "*the children of this world.*" We know a little of *this* world. O that we knew aright! O that we saw it with the eyes of faith! We should then confess it to be a *vain world*; "for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Solomon, who made a full trial of the world, with advantages for making it above all other men, solemnly pronounces the whole to be "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit." How emphatically is it expressed! as if his heart was full of the idea; as if he longed to impress it upon others; as if he could not find sufficient words to do it. And remember *who* it was that declared this. Not a hermit, who never saw the world: not a pauper, who has got nothing in the world: not a spendthrift, who has lost all he had in the world: but "the King of Jerusalem," who abounded in wealth and honor, and who had tried the whole round of worldly pleasures. If *he* pronounces all to be vanity, *We* need not make the fruitless experiment; for "what shall the man do who cometh after the King?"

This world is as *wicked* as it is vain. "This present *evil world*," St Paul calls it; "The world that lieth in the wicked one," saith St. John. It was *good*, when God first made it, "very good;" but sin has made it evil; filled it with snares and sorrows; insomuch that it is a part of Christ's redemption, "to deliver us from this present evil world;" and from Satan, "the prince of this world," who makes use of its pleasures, as baits, to destroy the souls of men. And yet, such is the evil heart of man, that
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he dotes upon this evil world ; he seeks " his good things in this world ; " " his portion is in this life : " he is " a man of the world ; " or, as Christ says, ver. 34. " a child of this world. "

But there is *another world*. Solemn truth ! generally admitted, but little regarded. O think of it, you who trifle away your precious time. There is another world ; and though you forget it, you are hastening towards it every moment. Yes ! there is another world. Jesus Christ, who came from it, and who is gone to it again, Jesus Christ assures us of it. " He has brought life and immortality *to light* ; " he has made a plain revelation of it in the Gospel, which shows us the *certainty* of it ; the sublime, excellent and spiritual *nature* of it, as in our text ; together with the true and only *way* of obtaining eternal life, which is by Jesus Christ. Our Lord in his public discourses often spoke of another world, of heaven, and of hell, very plainly, very familiarly, very solemnly ; urging his hearers, by arguments drawn from eternity, to regard the things which belonged to their peace.

The world of which we speak is a world of *light*, and *purity*, and *joy*. " There is no night there. " Hell is eternal darkness. Heaven eternal light. No ignorance, no errors, no mistakes ; but the knowledge of God in Christ begun on earth, is there completed ; for " we shall know even as we are known. " The heavenly world is all *purity* and holiness. Nothing retaining the defilement of sin, can have admission there ; only " the pure in heart shall see God. " And there, *joy*, which also commenced on earth in the possession of " spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, " shall be full, uninterrupted and everlasting. " God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying ; neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away. "

Such is *that world* our Lord here speaks of: and it is the grand object of faith. Believers in all ages have kept it in view. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, lived and died in the faith of it; "they desired *a heavenly country*," and in the hope of it, were dead to this world; "confessing themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth." The apostles, "having the same spirit of faith," looked "not at the things which are seen;" like archers, intently viewing the mark they shoot at; their object was nothing visible and sensible; but they "looked at the things unseen," they seriously regarded, and carefully aimed at heavenly things, as the grand mark, the noble prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus.

And is this the character of real christians? Stop a moment and ask, Is it your's? Amidst the unavoidable labours and the lawful pleasures of this world, Is heaven the principal object? Or do you wholly forget it? It has scarcely ever a place in your thoughts? and can you suppose you shall ever enjoy glory without seeking it? Be not deceived, for,

Observe, II. It will be a great matter *to obtain that world*:

Notice our Saviour's words, "they which shall be accounted worthy *to obtain that world*." O it will be a great matter to obtain that world. Surely men do not believe there is such a world; for faith, of any sort, will work. What is it sets the world of men in motion? what makes them so busy from morning to night? Is it not the belief that they shall obtain something worth their pains? Why then are no pains taken to obtain heaven? Infidelity lies at the bottom of their sloth, or people would seek heaven as diligently as they seek this present world. "So run," saith St. Paul, "that ye may obtain." "Know ye not, saith he, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain." 1 Cor. ix. 24. The christian life is a race, and heaven is the prize: and a race implies

implies motion, vehement motion, and continued motion. O let us be in good earnest for heaven: Lazy wishes and formal religion will not do. Christ represents it as a great thing to obtain that world.

It will be a matter of amazing *grace* and favour. Labour, we must; yet, after all, it is a matter of pure mercy, for "the gift of God is eternal life." Every glorified saint will be filled with surprise, and be ready to say, Lord is it I?

"How can it be, thou heavenly King,
That thou should'st me to glory bring;
Make slaves the partners of thy throne
Deck'd with a never fading crown!"

And O, what a matter of infinite *joy* will it be! If angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, it is because they foresee its final result; the foundation is laid, and they rejoice to think they shall witness the top stone laid also, and shall "shout Grace! Grace! unto it." Yea, the blessed Redeemer himself shall rejoice, "when he sees the travail of his soul;" he will reckon all his pains and sorrows and sufferings amply recompensed, when he beholds the millions of his elect safely brought to glory.

O then, let the obtaining of that world be our first business in this. So Christ directs—"Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" let care for heaven precede all other cares: Seek it *first*, seek it early in life; and seek it early every morning. Seek it earnestly as the chief thing, "for what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul." Heaven is all, and heaven will make amends for all.

Observe, III. Some kind of *worthiness* is necessary to the obtaining of that world—"they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world."

This worthiness includes *merit* and *meetness*; or, a *title* to glory, and a *fitness* for it. Both these are necessary. But where shall we look for merit? Not in man. Man is a sinner, and a sinner merits

only hell, for "the wages of sin is death." "All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The best man in the world can lay no claim to heaven; if he could, there would be room for boasting: "but boasting is excluded." "No flesh shall glory in his presence." If any man glory, it must be in the Lord. It is the merit, or, more properly speaking, the righteousness of Christ, which is the believer's title to heaven. This, like the wedding garment in the parable, is the only dress in which a sinner can appear before God, or sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

But there is a *meetness* or *fitness* for that world, which is equally necessary. St. Paul gives thanks to God, Col. i. 12, "who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Observe, Heaven is for *saints*, that is, *sanctified persons*; and they who are not saints on earth, will never be saints in heaven. All who are designed for heaven hereafter, are prepared for heaven now. Only those who are sanctified shall be glorified. And this is evident to common sense. Every creature has its proper element. The fish cannot fly in the air, nor the bird swim in the water. And how can we suppose that the man who drinketh in iniquity like water, can be fit to be with angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, where all is pure and holy. A good man who was dying, said, "I shall change my place, but not my company." Let them think of this, whose chosen company is the profane and the lewd. O how vain are the hopes which many persons entertain of future happiness! In vain the proud Pharisee, who talks of his good heart and his good works, expects a place among the redeemed; for their song is, not "worthy self;" but "worthy is the Lamb that was slain, who hath redeemed us to God by his blood." As vain are the hopes of the carnal and worldly man, whose affections cleave to earth, who lives in the love and practice of known iniquity,

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iniquity, whose inmost soul abhors the spiritual life, who accounts the sabbath a burden, and who lives "without Christ in the world." Know, O vain man, thy hope is folly and presumption, and hear what Christ has declared with a double *Verily*—"Except a man be born again he *cannot* see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3.

But thrice happy are they who are prepared for heaven; who are "born of the Spirit," and made spiritual in the frame of their mind; whose hearts are weaned in some degree from earthly things; who possess the world as though they possessed it not; who have desires and affections suited to the work and delight of heaven: "He who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God;" these are "the first fruits of the Spirit," the foretaste of heaven; and those who enjoy it shall be "accounted worthy to obtain that world."

Observe, IV. That the relations of the present world will not subsist in the world to come; our Lord says, *they neither marry nor are given in marriage.*

This expression is not intended to disparage that kind of union; for marriage was ordained of God himself, while yet our first parents retained their original innocence. This relation is the first that subsisted between human beings; it is the source of all other relations, and superior to them all; for, "for this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife." And our Lord was so far from discouraging marriage, that he graced a marriage feast with his presence, and wrought his first miracle there.

But in heaven, this relation will cease; because the purposes for which it was instituted will also cease. There will be no death in heaven; consequently no vacancies, such as death here makes, to be filled up. In this world "one generation passeth away and another cometh." The world is like an

an inn, where travellers take a hally refreshment, and are gone; while a suecession of new travellers occupy their places. Where are the former inhabitants of this place? they are mingled with the dust, the places which knew them, know them no more: We who are present supply their room; and, in a short time, another generation shall succeed us. But the inhabitants of heaven dwell in a "continuing city," "a house not made with hands, whose builder and maker is God;" yea, they are like "pillars in his temple, and shall no more go out."

The blessed God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, has been pleased to appoint marriage as a remedy against fornication, that natural desires might not become brutal, but be under direction and controul. Alas! what abominations spring from the neglect of this remedy! what impurities, what excesses, what poverty, what disease, what infamy, what bloodshed, what misery have abounded in the world, by the unbridled lusts of the sexes! And, O how few consider that "for all these things God will bring them into judgment!" But in the heavenly world, those who were on earth purified in measure, shall be perfectly pure; the body of sin and death shall also be purged in the grave; and no disorderly passions, nor sensual appetites, shall ever molest them again.

Nor shall the glorified need the aid of that domestic friendship and comfort which result from the married state, and which are well suited to our embodied state; for even in Paradise the Creator judged "it was not good for man to be alone." But in heaven there will be no occasion for the lesser streams of happiness, when believers have arrived at the fountain. In that blessed state, "the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Rev. xxi. 3. And it is added, ver. 22. "the city had no need of the

the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." God, in Christ, will be the everlasting fountain of knowledge and joy; so that the aid of creature comforts shall no more be wanted, than the light of a candle at noon day.

O let us learn from hence to sit loose to all creatures and creature comforts; "it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." 1 Cor. vii. 29.

Observe, V. In that world, *death* will be for ever abolished.

This is a dying world. We are placed as in a field of battle, our relations and neighbours are falling all around us, so that we may almost say— "Where is the earth that hath not been alive?" Death is to mortals "The king of terrors." Many thoughtless creatures, indeed, will hardly allow themselves to think of it; but, when it approaches, what agonies and terrors seize their souls; sin is neither pardoned nor subdued, and preparation for eternity is not begun. Even some of the timid flock of Christ, weak in the faith, are, inconsistently with the glorious gospel they profess, too much in bondage through fear of death. But *Christ hath abolished death*, 2 Tim. i. 10. He hath taken away its sting, and changed its very nature, turning the curse into a blessing; and as to the second death, far more dreadful than the first, it is lost and gone for ever: *He that believeth shall never die—believest thou this?* John xi. Instead of death, eternal life is the believer's portion; even now the christian hath it, and it shall be perfected at the resurrection, when this mortal shall put on immortality. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Let

Let this reconcile us to death. We shall die but once. It alleviates the distress of some bodily disorders, as the small-pox for instance, that persons suffer them but once, and are not liable to have them again. It is a far greater satisfaction which Christ affords us in our text, *Neither shall they die any more*; especially as death itself is also become a privilege; it is the gate of life, and ushers us into his presence, where "there is fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

Observe, VI. The blessed inhabitants of that world shall be like the Angels; *they are equal to the angels*.

Angels are spiritual beings, not having bodies as we have, but possessing rational powers superior to our's. They are pure and holy beings, having never rebelled against God, as their fallen brethren the devils have, and as we the children of men have. They do the will of God with pleasure, and are the messengers of God's mercy to men; "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation."

At present, we are far inferior to angels, not only in our natural powers, but especially in holiness and purity. We inhabit a body of sin and death, and, by our connexion with a system of flesh and blood, are greatly hindered in our spiritual pursuits, and disposed to evil. Thus the apostle speaks, Rom. vii. 22, &c. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man, (the renewed mind); but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members;" and on this account he cries, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" All believers have daily cause to make the same complaint; "for the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, so that they cannot do the things that they would." On this ground, our suffering Saviour kindly apologized

gized for his sleeping disciples in the garden;
 "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak."

But our Lord here assures his people they shall be equal with the angels; they shall drop the clog of their mortal bodies, and lose the incumbrance of flesh and blood; no sensual appetites shall divert their affections from spiritual objects; but, with the same agility and spirituality as the angels themselves, they shall serve their dear Lord, day and night in his temple, and be supremely happy in the full enjoyment of God and the Lamb.

O let us endeavour to resemble angels now, as much as possible. We are taught to pray, "thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;" and that we may do it, let us not indulge our sensual appetites too much, but, with St. Paul, "bring our bodies into subjection, and keep them under."

Observe, VII. The resurrection of the body will perfect the bliss of God's people; *they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection; they shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead.*

The heavenly felicity of believers shall commence at the moment of death. No sooner are they "absent from the body," but they are "present with the Lord;" but their bliss will not be consummated till the morn of the resurrection. In the prospect of this, holy Job says, *All the days of my appointed time, (that is, in the grave,) will I wait till my change come; (glorious change it will be! for the Lord will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body.) Thou shalt call, saith he, and I will answer thee, (for the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God) thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.* Job xiv. 14. The human body is the exquisite workmanship of God's hands; and being redeemed by Jesus Christ, as well as the soul, it shall be rescued from the power of the grave. Then *the creature, the corporal part of the christian,*
 which

which had long been made subject to vanity, "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God." This is the "manifestation of the sons of God," when they shall appear like themselves, and like their glorious Redeemer. This is also called "the adoption." Believers are now the adopted sons of God; but this dignity is denied by the world, and sometimes obscured to themselves: But then God will own and publish it before all the world, and the matter will be put beyond dispute. Their bodies then shall be as much more glorious than those of the wicked, as their souls are now more gracious than theirs. And as Christ was by his resurrection "declared to be the Son of God with power," so shall his humble followers be. Rom. viii. 19—23.

Thus we have taken a distant view of the future world, of which so many useful hints are suggested in the text. Let us daily walk as expectants of another world. Let us remember it will be a great matter to obtain that world. Let us recollect what that worthiness is, which is requisite to the obtaining of it, namely, the righteousness of Christ, and the sanctifying influence of the Spirit. Let us remember, that human relations and connexions, however useful and comfortable at present, will cease at death; but that death itself shall also be abolished. Let us enjoy the thought of being holy, happy, and spiritual, like the blessed angels; and try to resemble them now in our cheerful and active obedience. Finally, in the prospect of a glorious resurrection, let us "be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Safety in the Ark for perishing Sinners.



A
S E R M O N,

ON
GENESIS vii. 1.

Come, thou, and all thy house, into the Ark.

THIS is the gracious invitation which God gave to Noah, just before the flood came upon the world of the ungodly. The world had been formed about 1500 years, and the number of mankind was greatly multiplied. But wickedness also greatly increased, until the wrath of God was dreadfully kindled, and he determined upon the general destruction of sinners. "And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created, from the face of the earth, for it repenteth me that I have made him." But Noah, who, amidst the general depravity, was righteous and pious, "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." To him he made known his designs, an hundred and twenty years before the flood; and directed him to build an immense vessel, like the hulk of a ship, in which himself and his family should be preserved. Noah believed and obeyed. The ark was ready, and the deluge was at hand. "Then the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark." Noah entered. The Lord shut him in. The flood prevailed. Mankind was destroyed. Noah and his family continue a year in the ark in safety, are then released from their confinement, and become the founders of a new world.

There is much instruction to be gathered from this

SERM. XXXIX.

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affecting

affecting history; and it affords a lively type or emblem of the salvation that is in Christ for perishing sinners. It is still the determination of the Holy God to punish the ungodly. He gives them warning, and allows them time and space for repentance. He has also provided an ark for the preservation of those who foresee their danger; and by the gospel he invites sinners to fly to this refuge. Happy they, who, like Noah, believe, and obey, and are saved. For the sake of order and of memory, we shall divide our discourse into three parts; and observe,

I. There is a deluge of wrath coming upon sinners.

II. There is an ark provided for preservation.

III. God graciously invites sinners to come into it.

I. There is a dreadful deluge of wrath coming upon the ungodly. Sin only was the cause of the flood in Noah's time, and sin will bring upon every impenitent unpardoned soul, a more dreadful punishment. "By one man sin entered into the world," and that man lived long enough to witness its rapid growth; he lived to see the world peopled with men, and over-run with wickedness. But in the family of Seth, from which it was designed that the Saviour should come, the fear and worship of God was long preserved. While these continued separate from the posterity of Cain, there was a seed to serve the Lord. But at length this distinction ceased: for "the sons of God (the children of Seth) saw the daughters of men (the posterity of Cain) that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose." The professors of religion married the profane; they were "unequally yoked with unbelievers;" and what was the consequence? Iniquity increased faster than ever. "The bad will sooner debauch the good, than the good

good reform the bad." Wickedness became triumphant, and many seem to have been giants in sin as well as in size. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was full of violence, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." The Lord who saw all this was greatly displeased; and, speaking after the manner of man, "he repented that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart." The blessed God cannot be disturbed by any uneasy passion; but these expressions signify his extreme displeasure against sin and sinners; they show that sin is most odious to his holiness, and sinners most obnoxious to his justice. Being thus provoked to anger, he said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is *flesh*;" that is, wholly fleshly, carnally minded, entirely sensual, sunk in fleshly lust. He therefore determined on the utter destruction of all mankind by an universal deluge. Yet he is pleased to give warning of it, and suspend the threatened ruin for one hundred and twenty years, which, as men then lived about nine hundred years, was such a reprieve to them as nine or ten years would be to us.

Men and brethren, sin is the same evil and destructive thing now that it was then. God is equally angry with sinners; and though he does not generally execute his wrath upon them in this world, yet he will assuredly do it in the world to come. Hear what the holy, fiery law of God saith to every transgressor. Gal. iii. 10. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* The condition of life by the law is personal, perpetual, perfect obedience to all its commands, doing all things required; and doing them always, without one omission, without one transgression. A single failure, even in thought, spoils a whole life of obedience, and

incurs the curse. You will say then, upon these terms, who can be saved? We answer, none. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." It is a vain thing therefore to look for life by the law, or our good works, as they are called; if ever we escape the curse, it must be through faith in Jesus Christ, who "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The whole book of God is full of threatenings against sin. It declares that "the wicked shall be turned into hell;" that "if the wicked turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready; he hath prepared the instruments of death." Psalm vii. 13, &c. What awful words are these! You tremble to see a criminal just ready for execution: behold, the instruments of eternal death are ready. And this is your own case at this very moment, if you are yet in your sins. "The wrath of God abideth upon you;" and, the longer you live in sin, the more are you "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

How merciful was God in giving warning to the old world. His servant Noah was a preacher of righteousness. The Spirit of Christ was in him, and by this Spirit he preached to the disobedient and rebellious sinners of that time, as St. Peter speaks, 1 Pet. iii. 19. *By which (Spirit) he went and preached to the spirits in prisons; which some time were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.* Christ, by his Spirit in Noah, was the preacher. The hearers, were the wicked people of the world in Noah's days, but when Peter wrote this they were *spirits*; disembodied spirits *in prison*, that is, in the prison of hell; so that they were not only drowned but damned. This passage therefore does not mean that they were in prison when Christ preached to them, as the Papists pretend: but Christ, by his Spirit, preached to them on earth; yet,

yet, alas! to no purpose. Noah might say, with the apostles and others, "Who hath believed our report?" They were disobedient! they did not regard the merciful warning; and very probably despised and ridiculed Noah for his faith, his preaching, and his building. Thousands would come to see the ark, and ask him what it was for; they would ask him whether he meant to sail on dry land; or, where so much water must come from as would drown the world? Such a thing, they would say, is quite contrary to reason; such a thing never was, nor never can be; and no doubt they would say Noah was righteous overmuch, and religion had turned his brain.

In the very same manner the merciful warnings of God are treated to this day. Serious religion is despised. Holiness is accounted needless preciseness; and *the terrors of the Lord*, by which we would persuade men, are reckoned idle bugbears, fit only to alarm weak people and children. Thus unbelief tends to eternal ruin and destruction: for no person will fly from the wrath to come, who does not believe wrath is coming; who does not believe God, who says it is coming. But this very unbelief fulfils the Scriptures. St. Peter says, "In the last days there shall be *scoffers* walking after their own lust, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But this is false. The world was once destroyed by water, and it shall be again by fire. Not only does the Scripture assure us of the deluge, but almost all nations retain a tradition of it; and we may see the traces of it with our own eyes. The trees which are found in the bowels of the earth; and the shells and bones of fishes dug out of mountains remote from the sea, are ocular proofs of this event. But sin hardens the hearts of men, and they will not believe till they feel. Our Saviour tells us it will be just the same at the day of

judgment, Matt. xxiv. 37, &c. "But as the days of
 "Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of
 "man be. For as in the days that were before the
 "flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and
 "giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered
 "into the ark; and knew not until the flood came,
 "and took them all away; so shall also the coming
 "of the Son of man be."

They knew not—mark the expression! *They knew not.* How could they help knowing, when they were told of it for 120 years? The meaning is—*they believed not.* They might have known, but they would not know; they would not believe; they reasoned themselves out of it. Just so do sinners now. They love sin, and they will not believe that God will punish it; which is, in fact, saying that God is a liar, and will not do as he has said. They were secure because they were sensual; they were eating and drinking, minding the things that were seen, and so neglecting the things that were not seen.

Nevertheless, "the flood came, and took them all away." "If we believe not, God abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away." Whatever God threatens or promises is sure to come to pass. The flood came. Then they saw what they would not believe. The day of mercy was ended. There was no hope for them; no means of escape; but they miserably perished in the mighty waters.

Let us now turn our eyes from this dreadful scene, to contemplate the goodness of God towards Noah and his family; let us consider,

II. The ark provided for his preservation.

God himself devised this means of safety. He directed him to build a vessel of immense size, and pointed out all the dimensions of it. Proper rooms were to be

be made for his family, and others for a small remnant of all other creatures, who were thus to be preserved from the universal desolation.*

Thus the salvation of the church is by a plan of God's own contrivance. The method of salvation by Jesus Christ is wholly of God. It could never have entered into the heart of man. No human or angelic being could ever have thought of God's taking our nature into union with his own; or have devised the astonishing plan of redemption by the blood of his Son. So remote is this method from the wisdom of man, that he calls it "foolishness;" but it is "the wisdom of God:" yea, "the manifold wisdom of God" is therein displayed; and it will be the admiration of saints and angels to all eternity.

As fallen man is totally ruined, it is necessary that his restoration should be in such a way as to secure the whole glory of it to God alone. And so it does. In the Redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ, "Grace reigns," from first to last. Grace devised the charming plan. Grace gave Jesus, the unspeakable gift. It is by grace we are called. By grace we are justified. We are sanctified by grace. By grace we are preserved: and the top stone of salvation, in the everlasting glory of the elect, shall be brought forth, shouting Grace! Grace! unto it.

It was the same grace that selected Noah from the great mass of the profane and wicked of that day. The nature of Noah was no better than that of others, but grace made him to differ. It is said, Gen. vi. 8.

* Infidels have pretended that the ark was not big enough to hold all the creatures, &c. but it appears from the calculations of learned men that it was amply sufficient. It was about 550 feet long, 90 feet wide, and 50 feet high; so that it contained near 43,000 tons of lading, and would hold more than 40 of our ships of 1000 tons each. It was nearly as long as St. Paul's Church in London. And if all the animals together, as the learned have computed, would not be equal to 500 horses, there would surely be room enough and to spare.

"Noah

"Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." The like expression is used concerning Lot. When Sodom was destroyed, he was delivered—"the Lord being merciful to him." The salvation of the best men must be ascribed to God's mercy, not their own merit. Onesiphorus was a good man, but St. Paul prayed for him, "that he might find mercy of the Lord at the last day;" and it will then be manifest, with respect to all the redeemed, that it was "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. ix. 15, 16.

The ark afforded perfect security. Noah being forewarned of the approaching flood, and having received full instructions how to build the ark, believed God and obeyed. St. Paul, treating of faith, Heb. xi. mentions him as an eminent believer. "By faith, Noah, being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is of faith." Here is the way of salvation. God warns. The Christian believes the warning. He fears the misery threatened. He flies to the refuge provided, and there he is safe.

Believing that God would do as he said, he began to build the ark. It was a work of great labour, but he did not shun it on that account. It was an unexampled thing; he had no precedent for it; and it required no small courage and resolution to persist in the work. Reason might hesitate and form objections, but "the Lord hath said it," was an answer to them all. The world would despise him, and treat him as a visionary romantic fool, who frightened himself, and wanted to frighten others, with ungrounded danger; but the power of faith carried him through every difficulty; and at the appointed season he received the end of his faith, even the salvation of himself and his family.

For

For now, the hundred and twenty years are just expired. The long expected day is just at hand—"for yet seven days, said the Lord, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth." Here was a fresh warning. While the time was distant they disregarded it. But now there is only a week to turn themselves in; and this week was spent like the rest. We do not hear of one person converted in the last week. The week is expired. And now the rain descends, not in drops, but torrents; and not for a few hours, but for six weeks together, without intermission. And not only were "the windows of heaven opened," but "the foundations of the great deep were broken up"—the great abyss of waters under the earth, which hitherto God had confined by certain bounds, "that they might not pass over to cover the earth." Psalm civ. 9. But now these bounds are removed, and the water covers the surface of the land.

"Probably, many of the profane scoffers, when they saw the encreasing violence of the waters, came wading middle deep to the ark, earnestly craving admittance; but as they formerly rejected God, now they are justly rejected by him. Ere vengeance begins, repentance is seasonable; but if judgment be once gone out, we cry too late. While the gospel solicits us, the doors of the ark are open; if we neglect the time of grace, in vain we seek it with tears. God holds it no mercy to pity the obstinate. Others, more bold than they, hope to over-run the judgment; and climbing up to the high mountains, look down upon the waters with more hope than fear. And now when they see their hills become islands, they climb up into the tallest trees; there with paleness and horror look for death, and study to avoid it, whom the waves overtake at last, half dead with famine, and half with fear. Lo! now from the tops
of

of the mountains they descry the ark floating upon the waters, and behold with envy that which before they beheld with scorn."

In the mean time Noah sits secure in the ark. The torrents of rain battering on the roof, the swelling of the waves which bore him up, the bellowing of the dying beasts, and the shrieks of the expiring multitude, create neither disturbance nor fear. He who "shut him in," had promised preservation; and while all was horror without, within all was safety, and peace, and praise.

And, who ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded? See the blessed effects of faith. "There is no condemnation to them who are in *Christ Jesus*," as Noah was in the ark. The law may thunder out its fearful curse. Satan, unwilling to lose his prey, may rage and roar. The world, condemned by the believer's faith, as once by Noah's, may frown, and fret and persecute; but the believer is safe. "The law of the spirit of life, in *Christ Jesus*, hath made him free from the law of sin and death." "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," and, well may he triumph over the world, for *Christ* hath said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome it." Yea, when the king of terrors himself shall advance, secure in *Christ* the life, he may say, "O death, where is thy sting?"

O how enviable, to the distressed multitude, was now the favoured situation of Noah. But, alas! it was too late. The same almighty hand which shut him in, had shut them out. Blessed be God it is not so yet with any of us. The door of the ark is yet open; and the language of the gospel is, "Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark." This is what we are now to consider.

III. God graciously invites sinners to come into the ark.

When

When the mighty waters were fast increasing; when no hope appeared from any other quarter; how would it have rejoiced the people to hear such an invitation as this: "Come, perishing men and women. Come into the ark. Come, and bring all your dear little ones with you. Here is room enough and to spare; and here you shall find a hearty welcome."

They were not favoured thus: But we are called. "Go ye forth into all the world," said Christ to his disciples, "and preach the gospel to every creature." And what is this gospel, but good news of a refuge from the storm, and a covert from the tempest? Pardon, safety, and eternal life to every believer? Christ, the ordinance of God for complete salvation, to every one who sees his need of him, and wants to "fly from the wrath to come." So Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness: the people stung by fiery serpents beheld it and lived. So the Israelites in Egypt sprinkled their doors with blood, and the angel of death, who destroyed their enemies, beheld the peaceful sign, and preserved their lives. To this moment the gracious Redeemer is crying aloud by his word, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come into the ark, thou and all thy house. Parents, come not alone. Ask your sons and daughters to come along with you. They will be welcome, for Jesus still saith, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." O may God make you and they willing to come into the ark!

APPLICATION.

How kind is God! Kind, in warning sinners so long before hand, of their dreadful danger. Kind, in providing an ark; in giving his Son to be a Saviour. Kind, in inviting perishing men to come and be saved by

by him. O praise the Lord for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.

But are we aware of the danger? Do we really believe there is a deluge of wrath coming upon sinners? Here most men fail. Sin is so pleasant, they are unwilling to think it destructive. But who shall we believe, the God of truth, or the Father of lies? See the fate of these unbelievers. They would not believe God, and were therefore secure: but the flood came and took them all away. But Noah believed, was moved with fear, built an ark, and was saved. You have no ark to build. It is built already. Yet a few days and the flood will come. Have not some large drops of affliction already fallen, to give you the necessary alarm? Lose no time then. The very beasts will hurry home when a storm is at hand. O seek a shelter in Jesus, and no where else. Neither the mountains nor the trees could save the unbelievers of old. Nor is there a saving name in heaven or earth but that of Jesus. Come thou then into the ark.

And what say the rest of your house? Shall the husband come, and the wife be shut out? or the wife enter, and the husband be excluded? Or, dear young people! shall your parents be safe in the ark, and you their children perish in the water? God forbid! O families, be concerned to be saved altogether. Come thou and *all* thy house into the ark; *servants* and all. If one be left behind, he perishes for ever. God make you willing to be saved.

And you, believers in Jesus, who are safe in the ark, rejoice in your security. Who can conceive what must have been the grateful feelings of Noah's heart when the Lord shut him in; and especially, when all was over, and he came safely out: Such, however, are the grateful feelings of a believer safe in Christ, and a believer safe in glory. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ!

The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ.



S E R M O N,

O N

PHILIPPIANS iii. 8.

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

LIFE is short! It is a most serious reflection, Life is short! The weakness and folly of childhood, the vanity and vices of youth, the bustle and care of middle life, and the infirmities of old age (if we live to be old), what do they leave us? A short life indeed!

Yet, man has a soul of vast desires. He is capable of much, and aims at more. Many things he cannot attain, and many are not worth the pains. O, 'tis pity, that man should not know how to chuse the good and refuse the evil; how to make the most and the best of so short a life!

Now, there is an infallible guide. O that man would regard it! Once hath God spoken; yea, twice have I heard this—what is the chief end, the first business, the true interest of man?

JOB was a man, truly wise and eminently good: he had deeply considered the nature and value of wisdom; But, he enquires, Where is it to be got? Men know where to get gold and silver; and get them they will, if possible, though at the hazard of life. *But where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?* All nature falters in giving an answer; but God himself vouchsafes to give it. *To man, he said,* perhaps to Adam the first man: however to us, to every man of us, he says, *The fear of the Lord, behold, that is wisdom, and, to depart from evil, that is understanding.* True religion is the true wisdom.

SER. XL.

R r

SOLOMON,

—SOLOMON, deemed the wisest of men, speaks the same language; and thus concludes his book of dear-bought wisdom. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; of what matter?* The subject he proposed in the beginning of his book, *What is the chief good? What is that good for the sons of men, which they should do all the days of their life?* (Eccl. ii. 3). And here we have it. *Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man, or rather the whole of man;* his highest wisdom, his proper duty, his true excellence, his best interest.

But a greater than Solomon is here. What saith Jesus, “the Wisdom of God,” Wisdom incarnate? *This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent* (John xvii. 3.) as if he had said, The way to eternal life; the earnest of it; the evidence of right and title to it; and the final enjoyment of it; consists in, and is connected with, the knowledge of the only true God, in opposition to all false gods; and in the like knowledge of Christ his Son, the only Mediator and Saviour, in opposition to every other mediator, or pretended way of acceptance with God.

In our text, St. Paul adds his testimony to the former; the testimony of his own experience. He was a man of learning, and had been a zealot for the Jewish law, a hater of Christ, and a bloody persecutor of his church; but grace had renewed his mind and changed his heart; he no longer boasted of his works, or went about to establish his own righteousness; but the law became his schoolmaster to bring him to Christ; through the law, he became dead to the law; now he desires to be found in Christ, and depends alone upon his righteousness.

What things were *gain* to him, he counted *loss* for Christ; and that, not only at his first conversion, but many years after, when he wrote this epistle, he was still of the same mind. “Yea, doubtless,” saith he, “I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” He gladly parted

parted with all his carnal confidence, all his former reputation, and all his worldly enjoyments, for this excellent knowledge; and thought himself an immense gainer by the change.

The true knowledge of Christ is as excellent as ever. We ought to value it as much as Paul did; and that we may do so, let us consider,

1. What this knowledge is; and
2. The excellency of it.

I. Let us shew what this knowledge is.

We may consider the knowledge of Christ as opposed to *Paganism*, to *Judaism*, and to the merely *National religion* of formal professors.

The knowledge of Christ stands opposed to the ignorance of the heathen. "The world by wisdom knew not God." (1 Cor. i. 21.) The wisest Pagans, by their natural light and boasted philosophy, did not attain a true knowledge of God, and the way of salvation; "they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened." Witness, not only their altar "to the unknown God," but also the multitude of idols they worshipped; the absurd notions they entertained of their gods; and the horrid, bloody, and obscene rites of their worship.

The knowledge of Christ is to be distinguished from the knowledge of the Law of Moses. "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." The religion of the Jews consisted much in rites and ordinances, which were obscure, compared with the religion of the Gospel. They had "the shadow of good things to come," we have the substance.

This knowledge is also something far superior to the speculative, unsanctified notions of nominal christians, "who profess they know God, but in works deny him;" who have "the form of godliness, but deny the power;" who "name the name of Christ, but depart not from iniquity;" and to whom Christ

will say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you." That knowledge which Paul so much prized was truly valuable and useful, and, indeed, includes the whole of true vital religion. We may define it to be

A *spiritual, supernatural, experimental, and practical* knowledge of Christ, in his person, character, and work; as revealed in the Gospel.

It is *spiritual*. It is the work of the Spirit of God to communicate it—"God shines into the heart." Believers have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ:" (Eph. i.) and the words which he speaks to the soul "are spirit and life:" "it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." John vi.

It is therefore *supernatural*; it is above nature. No man can give it; no natural man can receive it. We are assured, 1 Cor. ii. 14. that *the natural man*, (that is the animal or rational man; he who acts only upon principles of reason), *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*; that is, he does not embrace and approve them; *for they are foolish to him*: through the darkness, pride, sensuality and depravity of his mind, he cannot renounce them to his own mistaken views of things; and therefore condemns them as weak, irrational, enthusiastic: the apostle adds; *neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*: for want of a renewed faculty he cannot receive them; for they are perceived in their divine truth, beauty and glory, only by an understanding illuminated and rectified by the Spirit of God. What an eminent instance of this was St. Paul himself. Before conversion, no man hated the Gospel more; after conversion, no man loved it better; and, to this day, the change that takes place in the minds of men respecting-gospel truth is little less remarkable.

It is *experimental*. Believers "receive the love of the truth;" they "taste that the Lord is gracious;" "as new born babes they desire the sincere milk of the word;" the faith which they mix with the word,

gives

gives a subsistence and reality to the truth in their minds; so that it greatly differs from a bare speculation; the truth is in them, and the truth makes them free. Once more,

It is *practical*. Knowledge, in scripture, is sometimes put for the whole of religion, and forms the grand distinction between the church and the world. Hence wicked men are often said "not to know the Lord;" as the sons of Eli, for instance, though they certainly had a speculative knowledge of the whole law. Knowledge often includes all its proper effects, as *assent* to the truth known; *affiance* in the person known; and that *love* to him, which secures obedience. Thus St. John speaks, Eph. i. 3, 4. "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and, thereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."

The knowledge we speak of, and which St. Paul so much commends, is, the knowledge of CHRIST. Christ is the object of it; *Christ Jesus, my Lord*. It is a principal part of this knowledge to have right views of him; accordingly we find our Lord himself catechising his disciples upon this point. Matt. xvi. "Whom do men say, that I, the Son of Man, am?" and again, "Whom say ye that I am?" To others he said, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" Peter answered, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." This was a good answer, and he greatly commended it, saying "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." His knowledge of the person of Christ was supernatural; and our Lord, further to shew the importance of it, adds— "Thou art *Peter*;" (which signifies a *rock*), and having mentioned his name, takes occasion to speak of this confession he made, this article of faith, as the rock, or foundation, on which the whole New Testament Church shall be built. Indeed this is, "the pillar and

ground of truth; and without doubt, the great mystery of godliness, that Jesus Christ is God *manifest in the flesh*; "the Word made flesh, who dwelt among us."

The *character, office, or work* of Christ, is of equal importance. St. Paul's resolution was, "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and *him crucified*." Christ *as crucified*; as a sacrifice and atonement, was his darling topic: though it was a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, he knew it to be "the power of God to salvation;" and, indeed, the names he mentions in the text include much the same: *Christ Jesus, my Lord*. The word *Christ* signifies *Anointed*. Priests, and others, used to be anointed with oil, which denoted their fitness for the office, and their appointment to it; so Christ was anointed by the Father, filled with the Holy Spirit, and set apart by divine authority, to be the prophet, priest, and king of the church. The name *Jesus* signifies a *Saviour*; it was given him "because he should save his people from their sin." And the apostle adds, *my Lord*: he acknowledges him to be the sovereign ruler of his people, head over all things; and calls him *his*, because he was his sworn servant.

The knowledge of Christ, includes an acquaintance with his whole character, as drawn out in the New Testament. Here we see his innocence, his benevolence, his zeal, and especially his regard to poor sinners; how readily he listened to the cry of misery; how graciously he relieved the sick, the poor, and the guilty, when they applied to him; in a word, we see his glory, "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

But the knowledge of Christ also includes *faith* in him; according to that scripture, Isa. liii. 11. *By his knowledge, shall my righteous servant justify many*: this cannot mean the knowledge that is in Christ, but the knowledge of Christ that is in his people; and so stands for faith, which alone justifies a sinner in the sight of God. The true knowledge of Christ is always accom-

panied

panied with faith in him, for "they that know his name will put their trust in him."

This then is that knowledge which St. Paul attained, and which he prized so highly, that he said, "I count all things but loss" on account of it. Surely it must be most excellent in itself and in its effects, to be preferred above all things. If we saw a man willingly parting with all his property; selling his furniture, his house, his land, for the sake of buying one single article; we must conclude, if we had a good opinion of his prudence, that the article was of extraordinary value. And this no more than the Christian is expected to do, according to our Lord's parable, Matt. xiii. 45. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto merchant, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Such a merchant was our apostle. May divine grace make us such also! That we may see the wisdom of his conduct, let us now proceed to consider,

II. *The excellency of this knowledge of Christ.*

1. It is the most *necessary* kind of knowledge. Of many things we must be ignorant, because we cannot attain the knowledge of them; and of many things we may safely be ignorant: but the knowledge of Christ is necessary to salvation. "That the soul be without knowledge, is not good." Prov. xix. 2. There can be no *faith* in Jesus without it, and without faith, no salvation. There can be no *love* to Jesus without it, and if no love, no salvation. Indeed we may see how necessary it is, by the pains which Satan takes to prevent the attainment of it; for he, as the god of this world, hath blinded the eyes of men, lest they should get this knowledge, by the Gospel. On the other hand, we learn its necessity from Christ's zeal to extend the word of salvation; for God our Saviour "will have all men (that is *all sorts* of men) to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

1 Tim.

Tim. ii. 4. Observe, They must have the knowledge of the truth, in order to their being saved.

2. It is the most *heavenly* kind of knowledge. Every good gift comes down from God, but this especially. He who first created light in the world, “shines into the heart of man.” It is the Holy Spirit who takes the things of Christ, and shews them unto us. It is written in the prophets, and daily fulfilled in the church: “All thy children shall be taught of God,” The Spirit of God is the great teacher; but he teaches by the word. “To expect that the Spirit will teach you with the word, is rank enthusiasm; as great madness as to hope to see without eyes; and to expect that the word will teach you without the Spirit, is as great an absurdity as to pretend to see without light. God has joined the word and the Spirit together, and let no man put them asunder.” We read of having “the eyes of our understanding enlightened” (Eph. i. 18.) and we read also of Christ’s “opening the understanding of his disciple, that they might understand the scriptures.” It therefore becomes every one who wishes for this heavenly knowledge, to pray with David, “O Lord, open mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.”

3. It is the most *useful* kind of knowledge. Every kind of knowledge is useful in its place, for it is to the mind what light is to the eyes; but this knowledge exceeds all other in its blessed effects. What was it that made so vast an alteration in the heathen world, so that from beasts and devils they became holy saints and children of God? It was the Gospel, which “opened their eyes, and turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Hereby thousands and thousands escape the pollutions of the world. In this consists much of our regeneration; for the new man is “renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.” Col. iii. 10. And this renewing work is carried on by the same means; “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from glory

glory to glory." As the face of Moses got a heavenly lustre by converse with God, so, by the clear view of Christ's glory, in the looking-glass of the Gospel, we ourselves obtain something of his own amiable and holy likeness. O, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, which makes us like Christ! and, depend upon it, the more you know him, the more you will be like him.

This knowledge will humble the soul. Other knowledge puffeth up. The rays of the sun, which show its own glory, discover the uncleanness of a room into which they shine; so this excellent knowledge at once makes manifest the glory of Christ, and the deformity of the sinner. *Isaiah*, upon beholding Christ, the Lord of Hosts, cries out, "Woe is me! I am unclean." *Job* also exclaims, "Behold I am vile:" and *John* fell at his glorious Saviour's feet as one dead.

We observed before that this knowledge is connected with *faith*: "they that know thy name will put their trust in thee." "It would be arrant folly to trust a stranger with our all, but the knowledge of Christ encourages the soul to confide in him. *In whom ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth*, saith St. Paul to the Ephesians. None can trust him till they know him, and whoever knows him aright will trust him. Well may he trust him when we consider his almighty power, his infinite love, his divine righteousness, and his perfect faithfulness. In the view of these, Paul, in the prospect of death, could say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day." If we had a thousand souls we might safely trust Jesus with them all.

4. This knowledge is, of all others, the most *pleasant*. Knowledge, in general, is grateful to the mind; and yet some kinds of knowledge are painful. Solomon says, "In much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Eccl. i. 18. There must be a great deal of pains to get it, and a great deal of care to keep it: the more we know, the more

more we see remains to be known; and the more we perceive of the folly, madness, and misery of men. But there are no such inconveniencies attending this knowledge; it is more easily attained; and he that increaseth it, increaseth his joy at the same time. "I rejoice at thy word," saith the Psalmist, "as he that findeth great spoil." "The law of thy mouth is to me better than gold or silver." "Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it, and it was the joy and rejoicing of my heart." What support does the afflicted Christian find in the Gospel of Christ! he may say, "Thy statutes have been my song in the days of my pilgrimage." Hear Paul and Silas singing aloud at midnight, in the jail of Philippi; It was the knowledge of Christ that made them sing. And thousands of dying believers have rejoiced in Christ, amidst the pains of dissolving nature, and even in the flames of martyrdom. How excellent then is this knowledge of Christ!

APPLICATION.

IS the knowledge of Christ so excellent, then, *Do we possess it?* St. Paul said to the Corinthians—"Some of you have not the knowledge of God: I speak it to your shame;" and a shame indeed it is, for those who have the means of knowledge, to remain destitute of it. And it is more than a shame. It is a sin; and a sin of the most fatal kind; it keeps us from the exercise of repentance, faith, love and obedience; yea, our Lord makes it the grand cause of final ruin. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

O think of this, while opportunity remains to obtain the knowledge of Christ, Seek it in the means of his appointment. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God." Seek it earnestly, according to the divine direction. Prov. iii. 3, 4. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

standing; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; for the Lord giveth wisdom, he layeth up *sound wisdom* for the righteous."

And, O what cause have they for thankfulness, who have obtained this "sound wisdom," this most excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ! You cannot have a greater cause for joy. Christ himself gives you joy of it. "Blessed are your eyes for they see!" On a like occasion, "Jesus rejoiced, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." You have greater cause for joy and praise, than if you had got the knowledge of all languages, arts, and sciences; these might make you famous among men, but their advantage would be dropped in the grave. A very learned man once said on his dying bed, "I have spent my life in laborious trifling." He only is truly wise who is "wise to salvation." In this excellent knowledge you are allowed to glory; for "thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, &c." O be thankful to him who hath called you out of darkness into this marvellous light.

But while you are thankful for it, do not be proud of it. The wisest know but little of what is to be known. "Follow on to know the Lord." "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ." Read the word, and meditate in it day and night. Pray over it, and pray for the Spirit to lead you into all truth. And while you praise him with your lips, remember also to praise him with your lives. Let it not be said, "What do you more than others?" But prove the superior excellency of your knowledge, by the superior excellency of your conduct; "for, ye were sometimes darkness,

darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; *walk as children of light*, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Believers are appointed to be lights in the world; and much of their duty is comprehended in one word—SHINE! "*Let your light*, says our Saviour, *shine*, and shine before men too; that is not forbidden; yea, it is commanded. But it is thus commanded, *Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your GOOD WORKS—Yourself, as little as may be—your WORKS more than yourself, (as the sun giving us light, will scarcely suffer us to look upon itself)—may glorify—Whom? You? No, but your Father, who is in heaven.* Let your light shine; it is given for that purpose; but let it always shine to the glory of the Father of lights." Thus may you be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding; being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, until you see him, no more "through a glass darkly, but face to face;" until you know, even as also you are known.

Now unto God, the Father of lights—to Jesus Christ the Sun of righteousness, and to the Holy Spirit of truth, be all glory, by every enlightened mind in heaven and earth, for ever and ever. Amen.

5 DE60

The Heart taken.

A

S E R M O N

O N

LUKE XI. 21,



When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace : But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

THE miracles which our Lord performed were so obvious, that it was impossible for his greatest enemies to deny them ; but such was the malice of their hearts, that they said he performed them by the power of the devil. Our Saviour, in answer to this, shows how unreasonable and absurd is it to suppose that Satan should cast out himself, or any way oppose his own kingdom ; “ for every kingdom divided against itself is brought into desolation, and a house divided against itself falleth.” But in the text he shows how he had performed the miracle of casting out Satan, namely, by his superior power. He compares Satan to a strong man, armed with weapons to defend his house ; and he compares himself to one that is stronger than the strong man. He allows that the devil is strong, but asserts that he is much stronger, and therefore able to cast him out. By this similitude our Lord vindicates his miracles, and proves he did not act in concert with Satan. But the words are also fairly applicable to Christ’s continual victories over the devil in the hearts of men, by that power which still goes along with the preaching of the Gospel. They describe two things :

I. The sad condition of an unconverted sinner:
and,

II. The wonderful power of divine grace in his conversion.

1. Here is the sad condition of an unconverted sinner; his heart is the habitation of Satan; the faculties of his mind, and the members of his body are Satan's *gods*; they are employed by him in the service of sin; and while this is the case, there is peace—a false and dangerous security; until Christ, by his gospel disturbs it, and by his grace, delivers the prey from the hands of the mighty.

(1.) The human heart is a *palace*, a noble building; at first erected for the habitation of the great and glorious God, who made man “in his own image, after his own likeness,” “in knowledge, righteousness and holiness.” “But the holy God “has withdrawn himself, and left this temple desolate. The stately ruins are visible to every eye, “and bear in their front this doleful inscription—
“HERE GOD ONCE DWELT. The comely order “of this house is turned into confusion; the beauties of holiness into noisome impurities; the “house of prayer into a den of thieves; the noble “powers of the soul, designed for divine contemplation and delight, are alienated to the service of “base idols and despicable lusts. The whole soul “is like the ruined palace of some great prince, in “which you see, here the fragments of a lofty pillar, there the shattered remains of a curious statue, and all lying neglected and useless among “heaps of dirt. The faded glory, the darkness, the “impurity of this palace plainly shew *the great inhabitant is gone!*” But,

(2.) The heart is now become the palace of Satan. Great is the power of the devil in this world, and over the minds of wicked men. This is an unwelcome truth; but it must be told. Our Saviour calls him, (John xiv. 30.) *the Prince of this world*—He

—He who rules in this kingdom of darkness, and who is also called (2 Cor. iv. 4) *the god of this world*, because of the great interest he has in the world, and the homage that is paid to him by the multitudes in the world, and the great sway that, by divine permission, he beareth in the hearts of his subjects. The worship of the heathens is the worship of the devil. Those who worship Jupiter, Bacchus, Venus, or any other idol, do really worship the devil; and the foolish, filthy and bloody rites and ceremonies of their worship are very fit for such devilish gods. But it is not only among pagans that he reigns. St. Paul assures us, Eph. ii. 2. that unconverted men “walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air—the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience—those who are disobedient to God, are obedient to Satan: he works powerfully in them; they follow his suggestions; they comply with his temptations; they are subject to his commandments; and are “led captive by him at his will.” This is a very awful state! People may be in it without knowing it. But all are in it *by nature*: all are yet in it, who “walk after the flesh, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind.”

The dwelling of Satan in a sinner is further insisted on in this chapter, verse 24, &c. “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest: and finding none, he saith, *I will return to my house*.”—There may be a partial and temporary reformation in a sinner; but without a real change, the devil will resume his power, “and the last state of that man is worse than the first.”

The heart of man is either God’s house, or Satan’s. If God does not rule there by his Spirit, Satan does: and it may easily be known who rules. St. John plainly decides this matter, 1 Epist. iii. 7. “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that

doth righteousness, is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." Our Lord spake the same language to the wicked Jews. They boasted that they were Abraham's children, and the people of God; but he faithfully told them "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." "Know ye not," saith the apostle Paul, Rom. vi. 16. "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, *his* servants ye are, to whom ye obey; whether of *sin* unto death, or of *obedience* unto righteousness?" Sin is the devil's work, and death is the wages of sin. One person is under the power of drunkenness, another of uncleanness; another curses and swears, another lies, another steals. All these are Satan's drudges and slaves. Their slavery is the most abject in the world, and is worse than any other, for in other cases the poor slave longs for freedom; and gladly escapes if he can; but here the wretched sinner hugs his yoke, fancies music in his chains, and scorns the proposal of liberty. All this is owing to the power and craft of the devil, who

(3.) Endeavours by all means to keep possession—"the strong man armed, *keepeth* the house;" and this he does by hiding from his vassals the fatal consequences of sin—by hindering any intercourse with the right owner—and by filling the heart with prejudice against him.

He keeps possession of the sinner's heart by hiding from him the evil and wages of sin. He is called *a ruler of darkness*, he reigns *in darkness*, and *by darkness*. Sinners little think where he is leading them. "Surely, in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." (Prov. i. 17.) The silly birds are wiser than sinners. Sinners are told of their danger, but to no purpose. Satan hath shut their eyes, and they are determined to keep them shut; "they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds

deeds are evil :” and how justly may a holy God doom that soul to everlasting darkness, who wilfully rejected the light of life.

Satan does all he can to prevent any intercourse between the sinner and the blessed God, who is the original and rightful owner of the heart. Such is the love of God to his rebellious creatures, that he has sent his Son into the world to make reconciliation ; and he has also sent his servants to publish the Gospel, or the ministry of reconciliation, “ beseeching sinners, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled to God.” But Satan dreads the effects of the gospel, and therefore tries to hinder it. St. Paul says, “ Satan hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine into them.” He would keep the light of the gospel out of the world if he could ; and he tries hard for it in some places, by his persecuting agents ; but as he cannot do this, he will keep it out of men’s hearts if possible. He loves to keep men in ignorance and error. He persuades some to break the sabbath, and to forsake the house of God, and to neglect the bible ; and he keeps others in a state of wretched formality ; they worship God with their bodies, but their hearts are far from him.

He fills the hearts of many with prejudices against Christ and the gospel. Those who preach it and receive it, generally go under some name of reproach, and are so misrepresented by ignorant, interested and carnal persons, that they are afraid to hear and judge for themselves. Where open persecution is not permitted, this is one of Satan’s principal means of keeping the possession of the sinner’s heart. But this snare would be broken, if men would remember that it has always been the lot of good men to be despised—that Christ himself was treated in the same manner—that he tells all his followers to expect reproach ; and calls upon them

to rejoice and be exceeding glad on that account. Thus you see that,

(4.) Satan is but too well qualified to maintain his ground—he is compared to a *strong man*—and to a *strong man armed*. Devils are fallen angels, strong in their natural powers; vastly superior to men; and they have been long practised in the arts of destruction; they are like enemies flushed with victory, having succeeded in millions of instances, and were therefore not afraid to attack the innocent Jesus himself. Satan is *armed*; armed with astonishing cunning; he is, “the old serpent, that deceived the whole world;” armed with inveterate malice against God and against man: as a hungry and ravenous lion, he goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

We read in 2 Cor. x. 4. of Satan’s *strong holds*—fortified places. Ignorance, prejudice, beloved lusts, evil habits, the way of the world, &c. are Satan’s strong holds in the hearts of some; vain imaginations, carnal reasonings and proud conceits of self-righteousness exalt themselves in others against the knowledge of God; and by these means the devil keeps men from faith in Christ, and retains the possession of their hearts as his own property.

(5.) While the strong man, thus armed, keepeth his palace, *his goods are in peace*. There, is, indeed, “no (true) peace to the wicked:” God hath not spoken peace; but sinners speak peace to themselves, and Satan, by wicked and carnal ministers, who are some of his best agents, speaks peace also. Carnal persons have generally a good opinion of themselves and of their state; they think they have good hearts, are not so bad as others, and have no occasion to be uneasy. Just like St. Paul before his conversion—*I was alive*, saith he, *without the law, once*. He thought if any man would go to heaven he should. He trusted in his birth, and education; his good church,

church, and his good life: Satan, the strong man armed had then full possession of his heart, and therefore all was quiet; "but when the *commandment* came;"—when the holy, fiery, spiritual law, Christ's pioneer, came, and shewed him he was a sinner, a great sinner, the chief of sinners; then, farewell this old peace, this false peace, this fatal peace; then he saw *what* he was, and *where* he was; and was glad to get peace from another quarter, even from the blood of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

If a person was never uneasy about his sins, it is no good sign. It may be feared that Satan keeps his heart; for wherever the gospel comes, though it be the gospel of peace, it creates disturbance. It often occasions great agitation in a parish, in a family, and in the heart; and be not offended, brethren, if it do so among you. Jesus Christ has told us it will do so. (Luke xii. 51.) "Suppose ye that I am come to give *peace* on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather *division*"—"a *sword*"—"fire." Ver. 49. The gospel certainly tends to promote peace with God and man; but through the carnal enmity of the natural man, it becomes an occasion of great discord. Wherever the gospel was first preached by the apostles, it excited disturbance and persecution; and, to this day, where the true gospel is newly preached, it makes "no small stir," and people are ready to say, as of old, "The men who have turned the world upside down are come hither also." Satan will not quietly part with his prey; and ungodly men, who know not the nature and need of the gospel, will oppose it.

The gospel is designed to bring the heart to rest and peace in Jesus; but, as the soul must change masters, this revolution cannot be brought about without division. There must be a separation of the heart from the creature, in order to its union with God; for peace with the world and peace with him are inconsistent.

Having

Having thus shown you the first thing in the text, namely, The sad condition of an unconverted sinner, let us proceed to display,

II. The wonderful power of divine grace in his conversion—*when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.*

Observe here, the greatness of the Conqueror, Jesus Christ; he alone is stronger than Satan. Strong as the devil is, he is but a creature, and his power is finite: Jesus Christ is the Creator, and his power is infinite. He made the worlds. This earthly ball, the glittering stars, the silver moon, and the glorious sun, are all the work of his hands; and by his power all nature stands; “in him all things consist;” “for of him, and through him, and to him are all things, and to him be glory for ever, Amen.” This glorious and gracious God, “was manifested in the flesh;” he took our feeble nature, and became a man, that he might “destroy the works of the devil,” and rescue his people from Satan’s destructive hands.

See him in the wilderness encountering this hellish foe; he was tempted in all points like ourselves; but he vanquished the enemy, and he fled from him. See him displaying his superior power in casting out devils from the bodies of many miserable people. They could never resist his command. By a single word he relieved multitudes who had long been oppressed by Satan, and whose bodies as well as souls had been his habitation. He gave a portion of the same power to his disciples, who, returning from their mission, joyfully cried, “Even the devils are subject unto us through thy name!” “I beheld,” said he, “Satan fall as lightning from heaven.” Thus was “the prince of this world judged.” The conquest was completed when he hung on the cross; and the triumph was celebrated when he rose to the skies—“he spoiled principalities and powers, and made

made a show of them openly;" "he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men."

The power of Christ over Satan was displayed in every country where the gospel was preached. The heathens became ashamed of their idols, and the altars of their gods were deserted. Those oracles, in which, perhaps, Satan had been suffered to speak, were struck dumb; the most abandoned of mankind were reformed and renewed, and the world was astonished at the triumphs of the cross. For it was not by the force of human laws, it was not by the edge of the sword, nor was it by the power of eloquence, that the gospel prevailed; no, "the weapons of this warfare were not carnal," and however mean they seemed in the eyes of men, they were "mighty, through God, to pull down the strong holds of the devil." Every man who knew its nature and felt its effects, would say with the apostle, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth;" "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ; by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."

As the strong man was armed, Jesus Christ is also armed. So speaks the Psalmist, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, meekness, and righteousness; and let thy right hand teach thee terrible things: Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee." Ps. xlv. Here Christ is described as a warrior armed for the field. The sword, is "the word of Christ," or the gospel; with this weapon he prevailed, and made his "glory and majesty" known throughout the world, subduing idolatry and iniquity to the faith and temper of the gospel, and thus rescuing his elect from the power of the devil.

In this conquest, Christ "takes away the armour,"

mour," on which so much dependance was placed. By the teaching of the Holy Spirit he takes away the scales of ignorance which covered the eyes; the soul discovers its danger and ruin. He renews the will, for his people are "made willing in the day of his power;" they are glad to quit the service of their old master, and "willingly" yield themselves unto the Lord." Thus is that prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled, "I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." (Chap. liii. 12.) Having conquered Satan, he takes possession. Much of the glory of Christ consists in vast multitudes of redeemed souls becoming his faithful subjects and humble followers. Subdued by his grace, they give up themselves to him, to be saved, taught, and governed: thus "he sees the travail of his soul," the fruit of his sufferings; and thus "the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hands."

"He divideth the spoil." As a conqueror takes possession of the enemy's property, so Christ, having subdued the sinner, now possesses what was before at the disposal of Satan. It is a sad truth, that whatever gifts a natural man has, they are applied to the purposes of sin; his wealth, his wisdom, his time, his influence, and all that he hath. How reasonable is it then, that the saved sinner, constrained by the mercies of God, should present his body a living sacrifice to the Lord, holy and acceptable; it is indeed his reasonable service, and the poet's sweet language will be cordially adopted:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

APPLICATION.

Whose habitation are we? Christ's, or the devil's?
One or the other rules in our hearts. Every man

is under the influence of the good Spirit of God; or the evil spirit of the devil. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" said the apostle to the first christians. So we may say to wicked men, Know ye not that ye are the temples of Satan, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience? Does *sin* reign in you, or *Christ*? What is your leisure time devoted to? What are your affections set upon? Is it upon vanity, pleasure, the lusts of the flesh? While Christ, and his great salvation, are neglected, the soul forgotten, sin indulged, prayer omitted, religion despised? O Sirs! your case is dreadful. You may, perhaps, laugh at all this; you may even say there is no such being as the devil; that the scriptures speak in a figurative way, and use strong eastern figures: But you may as well deny that you have a rational spirit within you, as deny the existence of good and evil spirits without you. Our Lord teaches us daily to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" or, as it might be rendered—*the evil one*. O that you might put up that prayer from your heart. O that you had a wish to be delivered from his power: for if you should live and die under it, you must hear that awful sentence from the mouth of Christ, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for *the devil and his angels*." Horrible company! frightful association! Yet, how just! Sinners hearkened to his temptations, and they must partake in his torments. His works they would do, his wages they must receive. In this life, they joined with devils against God and holiness; in the other, they must be shut up with them for ever. O that men would consider this in time; renounce the devil and his works, and open the door of their hearts to the Lord! Why should men choose that company in this world, which they would abhor in the next? Those who hate the company of the religious now, will not be troubled with it hereafter; but as ungodly company is their delight now, they will have
a miserable

a miserable eternity to pass with it: and let those who foolishly invoke the devil to take them, soberly consider, that the company so often invited will be terrible when it comes."

But, O believer in Jesus! hail, thou art happily delivered. Adore and love the great deliverer. Had not he interposed, had he not conquered Satan for thee on the cross, and in thee by his Spirit, thou hadst still been his wretched vassal. When Jesus had cast the devil out of a man, who had been miserably treated by him, he was so transported with love and gratitude, that he besought him, "that he might be with him;" (Luke viii. 38.) he longed to enjoy his company, as Mary Magdalen and others whom he had healed did; but our Lord saw fit to deny him this request; and ordered him "to return to his own house, and show what great things God had done for him." Go, christian, and do likewise. Like him, "publish throughout the whole city, how great things Jesus has done for thee."

The castle of the human heart,
Strong in its native sin,
Is guarded well in every part
By him who dwells within.

Thus Satan for a season reigns,
And keeps his goods in peace;
The soul is pleas'd to wear his chains,
Nor wishes a release.

But Jesus, stronger far than he,
In his appointed hour—
Appears, to set his people free
From the usurper's power.

The rebel soul that once withstood
The Saviour's kindest call,
Rejoices now, by grace subdued,
To serve Him with her all.

5 DEGO

OLNEY HYMN 6.

Christ is All.



S E R M O N,

ON

COLOSSIANS iii. 2.

But Christ is all.

THE necessity of having *some* religion is generally admitted, even by the most ignorant and profane. All agree that we ought to be religious; but what true religion consists in, is very much disputed. Every man forms a system for himself, and then flatters himself it must be right. But as there are various schemes, which contradict each other, we are sure they cannot all be right. How then shall we judge whether they are right or wrong? I answer, the gospel is our only rule. Bring every thing called religion to this touchstone. Bring it to this text, *Christ is all*; that is, in true Christian religion, Christ is all; he is the sum and substance of it; the beginning and the end of it.

St. Paul is here speaking of a conduct agreeable to the Christian profession; he is recommending to the Colossians the mortification of all corrupt affections; to "put off the old man of sin," and to "put on the new man of grace;" for a true Christian is "a new creature;" and in this state of renovation, or under the present gospel dispensation, he says, "there is neither Greek nor Jew; circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, scythian, bond nor free: but *Christ is all, and in all*;" that is, under the gospel, God has no partial respect to persons, on account of their country, their religious forms, customs, or situations in life: Christ has taken away

all partition walls, and men of all sorts stand on the same level before God, both as to duty and privilege; and for this reason, Christ is the *all* of a Christian, let him be who he may, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, master or servant; his whole salvation, hope, and happiness, from first to last. The words then teach us this grand truth, that,

In the religion of the gospel, Christ is all.

This is the general language of scripture. Whatever we want in religion, we must have it from Jesus. So St. Paul speaks, 1 Cor. i. 30. "Christ is made unto us, *wisdom; righteousness; sanctification, and redemption.*" We are ignorant and foolish in the things of God; Christ, by his word and Spirit is made *wisdom* to us. We are guilty sinners, liable to God's wrath; he is made *righteousness* to us, he is our great atonement and sacrifice. We are depraved and corrupt, he is made *sanctification* to us; he is the source of all grace, and out of his fulness we receive grace for grace." We must die and see corruption; but if united to him, he shall raise us up again, and deliver us from the power of the grave, and so be made *redemption* to us. Thus is he our *all*, that "no flesh should glory in his presence," but that, as "Christ is all," Christ may have all the glory.

Whatever we want in religion we have in Christ. To be *accepted* of God; to be *sanctified* in heart and life; and to be made *happy* here and hereafter, are the great things we seek in religion. In Jesus we have them all.

I. Jesus Christ is all in our *justification*.

We are sinners. We have broken the holy law of God, and by so doing we have exposed ourselves to the dreadful curse of the law, and to the terrible wrath of an offended God. However easy and secure ignorant sinners may be, it is a certain truth that sin renders us liable to wrath. Fornication and uncleanness; drunkenness and covetousness,
shut

shut men out of the kingdom of God. "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." *Ephes. v. 3, 6.* And O, who can tell the power of his anger! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Now when the blessed God intends mercy for a sinner, he opens his eyes to behold his true condition. He perceives that he has to do with a most holy God, who hates sin, and will certainly punish it. He sees plainly that he is a sinner, a great sinner, a rebel against God. He is alarmed, and justly too. His fears are well grounded; and in the manner of persons terrified at the approach of danger, he cries out, What shall I do to be saved? Is salvation possible? How may I get it? I would fly from the wrath to come, but, Whither must I fly?

To a person in this state the gospel is welcome indeed! It affords glad tidings of great joy. It sets before the distressed sinner, just exactly what he wants: A SAVIOUR, mighty and ready to save; to "save to the uttermost," all who come unto God by him.

Some, indeed, who are under concern of soul, do not at first see that Christ must be all, in their coming to God. Sensible of sin and afraid of hell "they go about for a time, to establish their own righteousness." "I have been a wicked sinner, faith one, but I will reform my life, and if I do my best, will not that suffice? I will be sorry for what is past, and amend in future. I will be religious, devout, and charitable; will not God then accept me?"

I answer by another question, Is this making Christ *all*? No; it is making him *nothing*. Christ alone is a sinner's righteousness. See what the scriptures say on this head.

Is the wrath of God due to sin? *Christ hath de-*

livered us from the wrath to come. 1 Thess. i. 10. Does the holy law denounce a *curse* against every transgressor? *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* Gal. iii. 13. Can there be no remission of sin without shedding of blood? *Christ hath shed his blood for the remission of sins.* Matt. xxvi. 28. Does the law require of us a perfect righteousness? *Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* 2 Cor. v. 21. Are we far from God? *He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. Are we, as sinners, abominable to God, and justly rejected? If believers in Christ, *we are accepted in the beloved.* Eph. i. 6. Are we every way imperfect in ourselves? *We are complete in him.* Colos. ii. 10. Are we pursued by the law? *We have fled for refuge to lay hold on (Christ) the hope set before us in the gospel.* Heb. vi. 16. Are we filthy by reason of sin? *The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* 1 John, i. 7.

These scriptures, and many more which might be quoted, show that, in the grand affair of a sinner's justification, or acceptance with God, *Christ is all.* Nothing more is needed; and every thing else must be rejected. No works or righteousness of our own have any thing to do in this matter. Good works are the proper fruits of faith, and necessary in their place; but in a sinner's pardon and acceptance with God, let Christ alone be exalted; for *by grace are we saved through faith: not of works, lest any man should boast.* Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

2. Jesus Christ is all in our sanctification.

It is admitted, on all hands, that men should be good and holy. Morality, at least, is thought necessary; but the scriptures go further, and require, not only morality of conduct, but holiness of heart; and declare that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," or go to heaven. But the great matter is, how shall this holiness be got? Many think that

that the free will and natural powers of man, properly excited by fear of punishment and hope of reward, will produce it. But this is a great mistake. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." In this business then of sanctification, as well as in that of justification, we shall prove that Christ is all.

"Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit on the souls of believers, purifying their nature from the pollution of sin; renewing them in the image of God; and enabling them, from a principle of grace, to yield obedience to him; and all this done by virtue of the life and death of Jesus Christ, and the union of believers to him."

Many devout persons take pains to reform and purify their hearts and lives, without sufficiently looking to Christ. They think that they must be justified by the righteousness of Christ, but they must be sanctified by a holiness wrought out by themselves, which, as one says, "is like squeezing oil out of a flint." They are not aware that sanctification is by receiving a new nature from above, and by union to Christ himself. Christ dwells in the hearts of believers; they are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." It is therefore by virtue derived from him that we become holy. "Abide in me, saith Jesus, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me; for without me, ye can do nothing." John xv. 5. Thus "Christ is made unto us, sanctification." He procured it for us; it is one of the fruits of his death; what he designed, in dying for us; "he gave himself for us, that he might purify us unto himself, a people zealous of good works." Titus ii. 14. It is one of "the spiritual blessings, with which we are blessed in him;" a special part of his salvation. All the springs of our sanctification are in him; and

they are communicated to us by the constant agency of the Spirit of Christ, who dwells in all believers.

The example of Christ is also the grand rule of our sanctification. "We are predestinated to be conformed to his image," that "as he was, so we may be, in this world." He is proposed to us in the gospel, in the purity of his nature, in the glory of his graces, and in the usefulness of his conversation, as the holy example which we should constantly imitate. It was one design of his coming into our world, that we might have before our eyes in our own nature, a perfect model of love to God and man; of holiness, innocence, meekness, patience, devotion and zeal. Nor is he a Christian, except merely in name, who does not daily strive to follow him who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Happy would it be for Christians, if they laboured more to be like Christ; and by constantly meditating on the beauty of holiness in him, they would be "changed into the same image from glory to glory!"

The word of Christ is the great instrument of our sanctification. By the word of Christ we are begotten again, and by the same word we are nourished unto eternal life. When our Saviour prayed for the sanctification of his disciples, he mentioned the means or instrument thereof: "Sanctify them through *thy truth*; thy word is truth." It is the truth of the gospel, the knowledge of Christ as our Redeemer and Saviour, that the Lord blesses for our purification. We must indeed study the law, as contained in the ten commandments, not in order by our obedience to it to obtain heaven, but to learn its spirituality and purity, to be made sensible of our inability to obey it perfectly, and then to see Christ as the fulfiller of the law, that we may live by faith in his righteousness. Confidence in Jesus, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and hope of glory, will wonderfully contribute to our growth in holiness.

holiness. And thus it appears that Jesus Christ is all in the matter of our sanctification.

3. Christ is all in respect of *true happiness*, both here and hereafter.

That man is a miserable creature, few will deny; and that sin alone has made him such, none will deny who know the scriptures. It is, therefore, only the removal of what made him miserable, that can ever make him happy again; and none can do this but Jesus Christ. Sin has blinded the eyes of men in their pursuit of good. They seek the living among the dead; like Satan himself, "they wander about seeking rest and finding none." On the contrary, sin procures misery. The pleasures of sin are momentary, but followed by long and tedious hours of painful reflection and remorse. Envy, and wrath, and anger, and malice, frequently raise a storm in the sinner's bosom; and many a gay worldling feels, at times, a foreboding and dismal prelude of that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," which will be the sinner's portion in hell.

But, O the matchless mercy of God our Saviour! "He remembered us in our low state." He looked down from heaven with an eye of compassion. He pitied our miserable condition, and determined upon our relief. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich."

The religion of the gospel is calculated to make man happy. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. xiv. 17: that is, in the righteousness of faith, and true holiness in heart and life; in solid peace of conscience, through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and a peaceable temper towards others, under a sense of God's being at peace with us; and in holy, heavenly joy and consolation, in communion with God, and lively expectation of eternal glory.

Christ is the author of true peace. It does not
arise

arise from a Christian's good opinion of himself and his duties ; not his good heart, or his good frame ; or his good deeds ; not from any thing done by him, or wrought in him ; but from what Christ has done and suffered ; from the glory of his person, the love of his heart, the perfection of his righteousness, and the fulness of his grace. The believer looks not at, depends not upon, himself, but upon Jesus ; and draws all his safety and happiness from him. " His conscience says, I will have nothing to do with any thing for salvation, but the righteousness of Jehovah Jesus, and his atonement on the tree. His heart says, this is all my salvation and all my desire. Hope says, I have cast anchor in Jesus, I cannot be disappointed. Fear says, I would not for the world offend my God and Father. Thus the whole man bows in subjection to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the miserable sinner becomes a happy believer, and Christ is all in all."

Abundant is the provision made in the covenant of grace for the present happiness of the Christian in his way to heaven ; and look at this which way you will, Christ is the sum and substance of it. Many are the great and precious promises made to believers, and "all the promises are in him Yea, and in him Amen." The Christian's state is safe, because Christ is his keeper, his sheep are in his hand, and none shall ever pluck them thence.

And as much of the believer's comfort is conveyed to him through the channel of ordinances, let it be observed that in them also, Christ is all in all. Does he *pray* ? he cannot live without it ; but Christ is the life of his prayers. He only is the way to the Father ; the new and living way into the holiest of all, by which he has access with boldness and confidence, being encouraged to ask what he will, and expect what he asks. Does he offer *praise* ? The chief matter of it is, "Blessed be God who hath blessed me with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus."

Jesus." He sees all temporal blessings flowing to him through Jesus, and is thankful for them; but his highest note of praise is: "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" Does he *read* or *hear the word*? he loves it because it is "the word of Christ," and no preaching has any sweetness in it, if Jesus is forgotten or slighted.

Look at the *sacraments*, and you will find them saying, Christ is all. What is *baptism*, but a declaration of our misery by sin, our need of Christ as a purifier, and a badge of our belonging to him? We are "baptized unto Christ," we are "buried and risen with Christ," we "put on Christ." The *Lord's supper* was instituted to be a memorial of Christ; the bread is the communion of his body, and the cup the communion of his blood. This ordinance shews us that Christ is the food of our souls, sufficient to nourish them unto eternal life; and is intended to stir up and strengthen believers to receive and feed upon him in their hearts, by faith with thanksgiving.

As Christ is the Christian's all, through life, so is he especially his all in *a dying hour*. In that important season, creatures, however useful before, are no longer of any use. What can then support the soul, just entering into eternity, but a precious Christ? It is *his* death that takes away the sting of death. It is the hope of being *with him*, and being *like him*, that reconciles the believer to the great change; together with his faithful promise that "of all the Father hath given him, none shall be lost, and he will raise them up at the last day." Through Christ alone it is that the dying christian may, and often does, triumph, saying, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!"

We go one step further, and add, that, in heaven itself, Jesus Christ is all in all. It is his glorious presence that brightens and cheers the heavenly world.

world. "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ," said St. Paul. This was what he thought "far better" than all his spiritual enjoyments and useful employments below. Yea, Christ himself expresses his most affectionate desires for the happiness of his people, by saying, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be *with me*, where I am, that they may behold my glory." It is an infinite mercy to be *in Christ*, this is our security; it is an unspeakable favour to have *Christ with us*, this is our chief happiness on earth: but the blessing that completes and crowns the whole is, to be *with Christ* for ever and ever. There all the millions of the redeemed shall be of one heart and of one mind, and with one voice concur to sing that Jesus Christ is all in all.

APPLICATION.

1. From what has been said it appears how erroneous, unscriptural, defective and destructive, every system of religion must be, wherein Christ is not all. Look around you; such systems will readily be found, in which Christ is not all; in which he is little or nothing. The mere moral scheme, or the notion of men's being saved by their good works, deprives him of all his glory, and renders the expence of his precious blood a needless waste; "for if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain." Gal. ii. 21. Beware of every doctrine that would lessen the honour of Jesus, and your regard to him. You cannot raise him too high, or exalt him too much, for he is all in all.

2. Let every one of us then examine his own religion by this rule. What is Christ to *me*? Do I prize and esteem him above all, as "the chief of ten thousands and altogether lovely?" In the all-important concern of approaching to God, and seeking *acceptance* with him, what do I, a guilty, filthy, helpless

helpless sinner look to and rest upon? Is it Jesus alone? Is he *my* all in coming to God? In the grand affair of *sanctification*—the love of God and the love of man; do I consider this as a part of the salvation that is in Christ, as prepared for me, and laid up in Jesus to be received daily out of his fulness by faith? And as to *my happiness* in this world of misery, do I draw it out of the broken cisterns of perishing creatures, or from the unfailing and boundless ocean of divine love? Do I daily endeavour to walk with God as *my God*, reconciled to *me*, in Jesus; trusting in him for all needful blessings, to keep me safe, and render me happy; seeing all my affairs in his hands, working together for my good, and leading me forward, step by step, to his blessed presence, where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore? Happy, thrice “happy is the man that is in such a case; yea, happy is that man whose God is the Lord!” Ps. cxliv. 15.

How rich is the believer! He who has Christ, has *all*, for Christ is *all*. *All are your's*, says the apostle, *whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are your's.* 1 Cor. iii. 22. The various gifts of Christian ministers are your's; the government of the *world* is upon the shoulders of Christ, who is “Head over all things to the church: your *lives* are given you for a blessing, whether they be long or short, prosperous or adverse; *death* itself, the king of terrors, is disarmed of its sting; and in whatever form it comes, it comes to be your eternal gain: All *present* things, spiritual or temporal, comfortable or afflictive, work together for your good; every occurrence yet before us in this world, is wisely adjusted by infinite love: and, to crown all in the future world, there is “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for you, and ready to be revealed.”

On the other hand, how poor, how miserably poor,

poor, is the carnal worldling, the careless sinner, the man who lives "without Christ in the world?" He has nothing, let him possess what he may. Could he call both the Indies his own, he is "poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked:" even now he feels an aching void, and death will soon convince him that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. O that you may be wise in time. Behold this glorious Saviour stands at the door of your hearts, and sues for admission. O consider the matter well before it be too late. "Have you sins, or have you none? If you have, whither should you go, but to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world? Have you souls, or have you none? If you have, whither should you go but to the Saviour of souls? Is there a life to come, or is there not? If there is, whither should you go but to him, who only hath the words of eternal life? Is there a wrath to come, or is there not? If there is, whither should you go, but to him, who only can deliver from the wrath to come? And will he not receive you? If he yielded himself into the hands of them that sought his life, will he hide himself from the hearts of them that seek his mercy? If he was willing to be taken by the hand of violence, is he not much more willing to be taken by the hand of faith? O come, come, come! I charge you come. I beseech you come. Come, and he will give you life. Come, and he will give you rest. Come, and he will receive you. Come as thou art, come poor, come needy, come empty," Christ is all, and has all, and will give thee all, to make thee happy now and for ever.

To him, who is all, be all glory, now and ever.

Amen.

5 DE 60



S E R M O N,

O N

JOHN vi. 67, 68.

*Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?
Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall
we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*

THESE words were occasioned by a remarkable falling off among the followers of our Lord. Vast numbers of people attended his ministry, and no wonder: The sanctity of his character, the benevolence of his heart, the amazing miracles that he wrought, and especially his sweet, heavenly, powerful manner of preaching, could not but excite great multitudes to follow him. Thousands and thousands listened to him with pleasure; and yet, the number of his genuine disciples was very small.

Having performed an amazing miracle, in feeding five thousand people with five loaves, the people were satisfied that he was the Messiah, and determined to make him a king. Our Lord withdrew, and crossed the sea. The people followed him; when he took occasion to deal very closely with them, and to point out the cause of their not coming to him for life. This gave them great offence; but it proved who were his true disciples, and that the rest were such only in pretence. The whole of his conference with them displays the faithfulness of Christ, and the fickleness of men.

The words of our text are very affecting. Many of his nominal disciples having left him, he puts the question to the twelve apostles, "Will ye also go away?"

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away!" Will you follow their example; or will you abide with me? Peter, in the name of the rest, dreading the thought of apostacy, answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" we can never expect so much happiness from another. And he answered well: for those who forsake Christ will never mend themselves, go where they will.

The words may be usefully applied to ourselves. Let us consider Jesus as putting the same question to us: and we may, with Peter's sincerity, make the same reply.

1. Let us consider the question, "Will ye also go away?"

This question was put to persons who had professed some regard for Christ. They had seen his miracles with admiration. They had heard his preaching with delight; and they had crossed the lake to meet him again. The same question, therefore, as put to us, supposes a professed regard for Christ, as set before us in the Gospel: for if we have not, in some sense, come to him, of course we cannot forsake him. But as the people of old followed him from false motives, and with wrong views, it may be proper for us to consider what it is that makes many among us profess to follow him. And it is plain that the little profession which some make, is the mere effect of custom. They are Christians because their parents were such, and because their neighbours are such. It is the religion of the country: and were these people in Turkey they would be Mahometans. The influence of superiors or friends, sometimes brings them to hear the Gospel, and the love of novelty keeps them under it for a time. Some persons are much struck with the fervency of a Minister of Christ, who speaks in earnest and from the heart; while the seriousness, the fervour, and the singing of a lively congregation, make an additional impression. Self-interest and worldly advantage make other

other men professors; as the people referred to in our text followed Christ for the loaves and fishes. A few others were alarmed by sickness and the fear of death, or affected at some public calamity.

But if a person's religion has no better foundation than these afford, we wonder not at his apostacy. Sooner or later such professors will go back, and follow Christ no more. And the world abounds with temptations, which will be fatal to those who have not "the root of the matter" in them. It may be profitable to point out some of these.

Persecution frightens some. Our Lord has bid us expect opposition in following him, for "they who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." We must "take up the cross" if we follow him; and those who sit not down to count the cost, will be offended when the trial comes. If relations and friends are angry and frown upon them, if superiors and employers withdraw their favours, if their neighbours ridicule and laugh at them, they begin to repent of becoming religious. They regard man more than God, and resolve to be religious only so far as may consist with their worldly ease and advantage. These are the people described by our Lord in the parable of the sower, Matt. xiii. 20. "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

Worldly pleasures, worldly cares, and worldly connexions make others forsake Christ. The Christian life is a spiritual life. Whoever is led by the Spirit, will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, nor walk according to the flesh. "If we live after the flesh we perish; but if we, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live." If we are Christians indeed, the world will be crucified to us,

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and we to the world; and though we are *in* it, we shall not be *of* it. But if the professor forgets this, and is drawn by degrees into self indulgence; if he gets a taste for gaiety and public amusements, if he can visit the playhouse, and sit down at the card table, he will gradually lose the favour of the Gospel; and, finding a manifest contradiction between the two masters he serves, he will soon quit one of them. He cannot follow Christ and the world too,

Excessive cares are almost as dangerous. They distract the mind, and make it unfit for religious duties. They steal away the heart from Christ. Anxiety about the world perplexes the mind; and they who "will be rich," and determine, at all events, to make a fortune, usually make such compliances with that view, as are inconsistent with their profession; they "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1 Tim. vi. 9. Thus our Lord saith, "He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word and he becometh unfruitful."

Worldly connexions ruin others. It is a precept of great importance, but too little regarded: "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." Christians should marry "only in the Lord." How many "have made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience," by neglecting this rule; and by presuming upon their ability both to keep their own ground, and influence their partner also. When Lot was about to leave Sodom, the angels bid him give warning to all his relations of the destruction that was coming; accordingly "he went to his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said, Up! get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city; but he seemed to them as one that mocked." Thus the two daughters who had married carnal men perished, while the two who were

were with him at home, escaped the fire with their father. Gen. xix.

Familiarity with worldly men has a bad influence on the mind. "They that feared the Lord, in old time, spake often one to another;" the primitive Christians were much together, "and continued daily in social religion; and while they did so, they were edified and multiplied. But if professors needlessly associate with wicked and vain persons, they will soon resemble them, learn their manners, and go back from Christ.

Negligence in religious duties is another cause of apostacy. The means of grace are of divine appointment; they are wisely calculated to promote the life of God in the soul; and they have the promise of the Lord's blessing to make them effectual. They cannot therefore be slighted without injury. As the body must suffer, if there be not proper attention to wholesome food; so the soul must be injured if ordinances be omitted, or carelessly attended. Declensions in religion usually begin in the closet, then extend to social duties, and at length to the duties of the Sabbath and the house of God. Be not *slothful* then; but "be diligent;" followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The falls and divisions of some professors have a very ill effect upon others. It is common for beginners in religion to entertain too high an opinion of serious characters, and to place too much confidence in them; and if any of these miscarry, they are hurt, and rashly conclude that there is no reality in religion. But they forget that there was a *Judas* among the twelve, and in every age there have been apostates; "nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, the Lord knoweth them that are his." But "woe to the world," and to ignorant professors of this sort, "because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

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This chapter will furnish us with another common cause of apostacy. We shall find that it was *the Doctrine of Christ* which offended those "many disciples who went back, and walked no more with him." Let us see what this offensive doctrine was.

The multitude had followed him because of the miraculous entertainment he gave them. This raised their hopes of his being a temporal king, and of their getting rich in his service. Our Lord, who knew their thoughts, directed them to seek, not the bread which perisheth, but that which endureth to eternal life; not meat for their bodies, but for their souls. He also declared *himself* to be that meat; that he came down from heaven; that he would give his flesh for the life of the world; and that except a man should eat his flesh and drink his blood, he could have no life in him: but that whoever should partake of him should never die, but have eternal life.

These high and mysterious declarations confounded and offended them. They murmured when he said he came down from heaven, for they knew Joseph his reputed father; and having no spiritual ideas of his discourse, they cried, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" In short, they thought these "hard sayings," not to be understood or believed.

Our Lord still maintained the doctrine of his descent from heaven, and intimated that, ere long, they would see him ascend thither. He told them that *eating his flesh* was not to be taken in the gross sense of the words, but was to be understood spiritually. He also showed them that their cavils and murmurs arose from the ignorance, corruption, and unbelief of their hearts; and that they needed divine teaching to make them wise to salvation, and that no man could or would come to him, and believe upon him, without superior assistance. "No man can come unto me, except the Father, who sent me, draw him."

These were the sublime and mysterious, but great and glorious truth, which so offended the Jews, and occasioned such a falling off among the disciples.

And

And is it not just the same to this day? Do we not still find that these doctrines give offence? The claim of Christ to a divine origin is opposed by some. The doctrine of his atonement is rejected by others. And the humbling doctrines of the necessity of divine influences, and of the sovereignty of God in bestowing them where he pleases, are held in abhorrence by many. Talk to men of morality, virtue and good works, and they will hear you: but speak of grace, of the blood of Christ, of faith in his blood, of being taught of God, and drawn by the Spirit, and then they cry Enthusiasm! Methodism, &c. But let us not be offended at this. It should confirm us in the belief of the truth. And while many go back and follow Christ no more, let us consider him as putting the solemn question to us, "Will ye also go away?"

The question is the language of *affection*. It speaks the kindness of his loving heart. Our gracious Lord has a real concern for his servants, for his friends, for his brethren; and he is not willing to part with them. But he would have them serve him freely, and without constraint. He keeps no slaves. This question was put to try them, to give them an occasion of reflecting upon their own happiness, and upon the misery of those who had just forsaken him. And it operated accordingly. It gave occasion for the excellent answer of Peter, which we now proceed to consider.

2. *Then Simon Peter answered him, LORD, to whom shall we go? THOU hast the words of eternal life.*

In this answer, we see the character of the man who made it. Peter was bold and forward, but sincere, affectionate, and candid. He speaks in the name of all his brethren, taking it for granted they were all of the same mind; though, alas! there was a Judas, a devil, among them; one who had "no part nor lot in this matter." Peter answers the question of our Lord by another question, *To whom shall we go? We seek eternal life, and where can we find it but in thee.* It is

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is as if he had said, Whose disciples shall we be, if we cease to be thine? Shall we go to the heathen philosophers for instruction? They are become vain in their imaginations: professing themselves to be wise, they are fools in the matter of eternal life. Shall we go to the Scribes and Pharisees? They are blind leaders of the blind. Shall we go to Moses? He will send us back to thee. Therefore we will stay where we are: we shall never do better.

It is observable that in Peter's answer, *eternal life* appears to be the grand object of the disciples; and the reason why they would not forsake Christ is, because he has the *words* of eternal life. He teaches the true *doctrine* of eternal life, and he is able and willing to *give* us eternal life, as his discourse has largely shewn. Let it then be remembered that

Serious thoughts of eternity, and sincere desires for eternal life, have a powerful tendency to prevent apostacy.

Serious thoughts of eternity! Alas! how few possess them. In how few do they abide and operate! How few live under the daily impression of the *shortness of time*, and the *length of eternity*! Which is as much as to say, How few are believers! For it is the office of faith to look forward to things "not seen," and to be influenced by them as if they were present. And indeed, this forms the grand distinction between the children of God and the children of this world. He that is of the earth is earthly; he thinks and speaks of earthly things; he that is born of heaven, is heavenly minded. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And it highly concerns each of us to know which of these is our character. It must be one. There is no middle state. And according to our state here, such will be our state hereafter. If eternal life be not our pursuit, it will never be our portion.

Those who are duly affected with eternal things, will certainly be desirous of instruction. They will seriously

seriously enquire how eternal life may be obtained. "What shall we do to be saved?" is the substance of their enquiry. Even the people who forsook Christ asked a question of this kind, ver. 28. "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Our Lord gave them this plain answer. "This is the work of God, that ye believe in me." As elsewhere also he declares, "He that believeth on me shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Every thing that relates to eternal life depends on Jesus. *He has the words of eternal life.* He discovered it more fully, and revealed it more plainly than any of the prophets. His gospel gives us a clear account of the blessed life, and immortal glory of soul and body in the heavenly world. It shews us the true and spiritual nature of that state, and what will be the business and blessedness of glorified saints. It leaves us to no uncertain conjectures, poetical fancies, or sensual notions of paradise; but clearly describes it as a state of knowledge, purity and bliss, in the presence of Immanuel, God with us.

The true and only way to eternal life is revealed by Christ. Many ways have been devised by men. A thousand superstitions have been invented by crafty or deluded men, and imposed upon the world, as means of obtaining eternal felicity. Every country and every impostor has produced something with this view: and carnal men still ludicrously and profanely talk of every one's setting up his own ladder to heaven. But away with all these. Christ has the words of eternal life. "Whither I go," said he to his disciples, "ye know, and *the way* ye know." John xiv. 4. Thomas, mistaking his meaning, said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" This mistake gave occasion for a charming declaration on our Lord's part. "Jesus saith unto him—" I am the WAY—the TRUTH—and the LIFE: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." No words before were ever so plain. The substance of this great truth was indeed taught by sacrifices.

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crifices. These preached the necessity of a Mediator, and showed, that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins; but it remained for him who is the *Truth*, the substance of all the Old Testament types, himself to say, *I am the Way*. Christ, by his death, opened the gates of heaven. The cross of Christ is the only key that opens the door of glory. "We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus." This alludes to the High Priest of the Jews, who, once a year, went into the holy of holies with the blood of an animal. The way into this was by the veil which separated it from the holy place. Our way to heaven is through the veil of Christ's body, crucified for us. And it is remarkable that, at the time of his death, the veil of the temple was rent in two, without hands, from the top to the bottom; which signified, that every obstruction to our entrance into heaven was removed by the death of Jesus; so that we may now draw near to God, and enter into glory, in full assurance of faith.

The words of Christ are "the words of eternal life" on another account. They are the *means* and *instrument* of that new and spiritual life in the soul, whereby it is prepared for eternal life. *The words that I speak unto you*, said our Lord, verse 63 of this chapter, *they are spirit and they are life*—they are to be taken, not in a carnal, but in a spiritual sense; and they are the means of conveying the Holy Spirit, whose influence is effectual unto spiritual and eternal life. It is by the Gospel that "Christ speaketh from heaven;" and when the Gospel is accompanied with the power of the Spirit, "the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and live. For this purpose it was that the apostles, though forbidden of men, were commanded of Christ to "go, stand and speak in the temple to the people *all the words of this life*." By the same words the children of God are directed, established, encouraged, and nourished unto eternal life.

In the view of advantages like these, well might Peter say, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Eternal life

life is our aim. Thy words reveal it. Thou shewest us the way to it. Thou art thyself the way. Thy word is the seed of life in our souls. Yea, thou art eternal life. To whom then can we go? We cannot, we dare not, we will not forsake thee.

Such, my brethren, are the sentiments of every gracious soul. With such views as these we shall "cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart," and abhor the thoughts of apostacy from him.

APPLICATION.

Have we *come* to Christ? Are *we*, in any sense his followers? If not, as we have already said, we cannot forsake him: but our case is no less dangerous. Woe be to those who, in a Christian land, a land of bibles and of sermons, "refuse to hear him that speaketh from heaven." Woe be to us if he should say to us, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." O, consider of it, thoughtless souls. If you would have eternal life, and surely you wish for it, remember you must have *the words* of eternal life. You must learn the way of life. You must be interested in Jesus who is the life. The Lord incline you, while it is called to-day, to hear his voice and live.

What we have heard of the words of life should endear them to us. The doctrines of grace are not idle speculations, or needless disputings about words and names; they are not a vain thing; they are words of life. O then "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly," let us lay it up in our hearts, and prize it above our chief treasure.

And now, let us consider Christ himself as putting this question to each one of us—*Wilt thou go away?* Others do. We live in a day when great numbers do. Like the apostate Jews referred to in our text, their carnal minds, filled with reasoning pride, reject the Gospel, revile the Scriptures, deny Christ, and renounce

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nounce the very name of Christian. The Lord pity them, and bring them back again to his fold! But wilt *thou* also go away? O consider well before you go. *To whom* will you go? Will you go to the modern philosophers? Not for eternal life surely! They say there is no such thing; and if you do want eternal life, where will you find it but in Jesus? Will you go back into the world? Alas, it is vain, and will deceive you, Will you return to sin and folly? It will insure your eternal death. Resolve then with Peter to cleave to Christ.

But pray for persevering grace. Be sensible of your own weakness, and pray "Lord leave me not to my own will. To be willing to go away and leave thee, is to be willing to perish; and I shall infallibly be willing to do it, if thou leavest my will to itself." You must watch and pray continually. Resist the first motions to coldness, negligence, and apostacy. Guard against the seductions of the world, and the bewitching pleasures of sin. And may God fulfil his gracious promise—"I will put my fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from me."

"Lord! thou alone hast pow'r, I know,
To save a wretch like me;
To whom, or whither could I go,
If I should turn from thee?"

"No voice but thine can give me rest,
And bid my fears depart;
No love but thine can make me bless'd,
And satisfy my heart."

"What anguish has that question stirr'd,
If I will also go?
Yet, Lord, relying on thy word,
I humbly answer, No!"

NEWTON.

5 DE60

The Birth of Christ.

S E R M O N



ON
LUKE ii. 15.

Let us now go, even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass.

THE wise man observes, that "the eye is not satisfied with seeing." The truth of this observation is confirmed by the experience of all ages; only it admits of one exception—There is one object, and only one, which can satisfy the eye of the mind, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a proof of this in good old Simeon, mentioned in the 29th and 30th verses of this chapter. He had long waited for Christ, "the consolation of Israel," and he lived to see the infant Saviour brought into the temple; when, clasping the holy child in his feeble arms, "he blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Some of the Turks, it is said, put out their eyes, as soon as they have seen Mahomet's tomb, because they would not defile them again by regarding any common object. Does superstition teach them so to admire the grave of a wicked impostor?—O let us, as Christians, hasten to behold a sight of real glory; let us "turn away our eyes from beholding vanities;" let us fix them upon the adorable Jesus; let us say, with the admiring shepherds in our text, when just informed of the Saviour's birth, "Let us now go, even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass."

It was to *shepherds*; poor, honest, industrious men, that the good news was first announced:—an encouraging circumstance for the poor of this

SERM. XLIV. X x world;

world; and an encouragement for such to be "diligent in business," for, it was when the shepherds were watching their flocks by night, that these glad tidings were brought them. An angel delivered the message; and a multitude of angels joined in chorus—*Glory to God in the highest—and on earth peace—good will towards men.* Here humility and glory were joined in their extremes. He empties himself of his heavenly glory; he takes upon him human nature; his mother is a poor woman; a common inn is the place of his birth; he is born in a stable; he is laid in a manger. O deep humiliation of the Son of God, the Creator of the world! And yet, behold the glory! A new star directs the wise men of the east to the honoured spot; and a multitude of ministering spirits hymn his birth. Never was the birth of any earthly prince so highly honoured.

God gives us *information*, to put us upon *action*. When the shepherds were informed of what had happened, and where it happened, it put them upon action. Is the Saviour born in the city of David? Let us go then, said they, and see him. The wise men made the same improvement of their information. They saw his star in a distant country, and they followed its direction till they came to Bethlehem.

Let us learn another piece of instruction from them: "Let us go *now*," said they. What, at midnight! Cool Reason would have said, It is an unreasonable hour; and Covetousness would have said, What must become of our flocks? But these plain men, who had left their beds to attend their flocks, now leave their flocks to enquire after their Saviour. Let religion then be our *first* business; it is "the one thing needful." And what we do in it, let us do it quickly; the sooner the better, without a moment's delay.

We may learn another thing from their example: "Let us go," said they; they excited one another

another to this good work. Let the advantages of society be brought into religion. How many, especially in holiday seasons, will say to one another, "Let us go to such an amusement, such a public house, such a party of pleasure;" let us rather say, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways." Let us go to Bethlehem, and see Jesus.

The shepherds did as they proposed: "They came with *haste*, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." They believed, before they came; but now their faith is confirmed by sight. They were gratified and edified by the view; and "they returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had *heard and seen*."

Let us, then, who are here present, imitate these happy and simple hearted men. Let us go to *Bethlehem*; the name signifies *The house of bread*: there, in the contemplation of Jesus, may we find bread for our souls. To excite your serious attention to this divine object, let me inform you what you may expect to see—

DEITY DISPLAYED—
MAN REDEEMED—and
SATAN RUINED.

Let us go to Bethlehem, and see *Deity displayed*. The first promise that God made to guilty man was, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Jesus Christ, as to the flesh, is the seed of the woman; but he is also infinitely more. St. Paul says, "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman," Gal. iv. 4. It was necessary to our redemption, that the Saviour of men should be a *man*; for the same nature that sinned must bear the punishment of sin. But, had Christ been produced in the ordinary way of human generation, he must have been a partaker of a sinful nature:

this was prevented by the miraculous way of his conception, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus, that *holy thing* which was born of the blessed Virgin, was to be called *The Son of God*, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" fit to become "sin for us, because he knew no sin."

In what manner the *human* nature was united to the *divine*, we cannot tell. It is enough for us that it was so united. The testimony of Scripture is most abundant and satisfactory on this head. Let the following texts suffice. *His name shall be called IMMANUEL, which signifies, GOD WITH US*, Matt. i. 23. *In the beginning was the WORD; and the WORD was with GOD, and the WORD was GOD: And the WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us*, John i. 1. and 14. St. Paul assures us, 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16. that this is *the pillar and ground of the truth; and, without controversy, the great mystery of godliness—namely, that God was manifest in the flesh.*

O glorious and pleasing truth, God is manifest in the flesh! Surely it is highly desirable for feeble mortals to know their Maker; and, because we could not ascend to him, lo, he descends to us! Deplorable darkness had long covered the earth, and the wisest of men bowed down "to an unknown God;" but, glory be to his name, "the only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. This is he who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person"—"the image of the invisible God." Heb. i. 3. This is he, "who, being in the form of God, and who thought it no robbery to be equal with God," condescends to become a man, a poor man, a servant; that we, through his poverty, might become eternally rich. By his heavenly doctrine; by his astonishing miracles; in his lovely disposition, and especially in his divine person, God was manifested to man. *Show us the Father* (said one of his disciples to him)

him) and it sufficeth us. Philip wanted some *visible* representation of God, such as was sometimes granted to the prophets. Jesus, in a way of gentle rebuke, replied—*Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?* and then added these remarkable words, fully proving that God was manifested in the flesh—*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*, John xiv. 8, 9. “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?—henceforth ye have known him and seen him,” ver. 7, 10. “I and my Father are one.” Jesus Christ, then, is God manifested in the flesh. Let us go to Bethlehem, and see this great sight: Angels desire to look at it. Glorious mystery! We cannot fully comprehend it. “Men may speak and write of it; but it is not so proper to describe it, as to say that it cannot be described. We may speak of it; but the most we can say about it is, that it is unspeakable: And the most we know is, that it passeth knowledge!” Suffice it; that we believe and adore. Let but “the light shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,” and it is enough: we will dwell at Bethlehem all our days, until he shall remove us to Bethel above, where we hope no longer to see “through a glass darkly, but face to face.”

II. Let us go to Bethlehem and behold *Mary* redeemed!

The redemption of fallen, guilty, helpless man, was the grand design of the Saviour's birth. *God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to REDEEM them that were under the law.* He was named JESUS, because he came to “save his people from their sins.” There is something delightful in the name *Saviour*. Cicero, the Roman orator, said, that when travelling in Greece, he saw a pillar inscribed with this word—SAVIOUR.

He admired the fulness of the name, but he knew not its Christian meaning. How much more may the redeemed sinner admire it?—

“ ’Tis music in the sinner’s ears,

“ ’Tis life, and health, and peace.”

It was in this character that the saints of old long expected his appearance. “To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him should receive remission of sins.” About the time of his coming, the godly people in Jerusalem were “looking for redemption,” and, with Simeon, “waiting for the consolation of Israel.” Our Lord himself declares this to be the chief design of his coming.—“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not *perish*, but have everlasting life,” John iii. 16. Observe, it was to save sinners from *perishing*; for *perish* we must, without an interest in him. Do we know this? Why do we call him a *Saviour*, if we see not our need of deliverance? and from what?—from *sin* and from *hell*. If we are not saved from sin here, we shall not be saved from hell hereafter.

“God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and (by making him a sacrifice) for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,” Rom. viii. 3. Mark how the Son of God appeared—“in the likeness of sinful flesh;” his nature was perfectly pure; but it had the likeness of our’s, which is wholly corrupt. “He knew no sin;” none in nature, none in practice. He had “a clean heart, and pure hands.” He could challenge his bitterest enemies to convince him of sin; yea, he defied Satan himself, the great accuser—“The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” Thus he was a pure and spotless lamb, fit to become a sacrifice for sin. Under the law, every victim must be perfect, and without blemish. It was necessary the Lamb of

God

God should be so; for "he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin," 1 John iii. 5.

Being thus pure and holy, the sins of the whole church were laid upon him. "He was made sin for us;" "he suffered for our sins;" "the Lord laid upon him our iniquities;" "he bore our sins, in his own body, on the tree." And thus God *condemned sin, in the flesh*: he condemned our sin, in the flesh of Christ; he shewed his extreme hatred of it; he passed sentence of death upon it; and executed that sentence in the dreadful death of our Lord. And thus, the condemning of sin in Christ our surety, prevents the condemning of it in our persons. And this is the ground of that excellent privilege mentioned Rom. viii. 1. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." But this is not at all: the end and design of this is, *that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit*. Thus the perfect righteousness, demanded by the moral law, is fulfilled in us; not in us personally, but by our surety in our nature, and in our stead; and so might be deemed, in legal estimation, to be fulfilled for, and by, all those of us who truly believe, and who prove the sincerity of our faith by a holy walk.

O the grace and love of the blessed Jesus! He, the most high God, blessed for evermore, consented to become man. He who was *life*, and gave life to all, became a mortal man. He was *born to die*. *Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same*. O love, beyond example or degree!

"O for this love let rocks and hills

"Their lasting silence break;

"And all harmonious human tongues,

"The Saviour's praises speak."

Thus Jesus "delivered us from the wrath to come." Our sin deserved *wrath*, the wrath that is to come; for God bears with sinners now, and

"endures,

"endures, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath which are fit for destruction." But God is reconciled to every believer in Jesus. "He was angry, but his anger is turned away." Those who believe "have passed from death unto life;" those who are "redeemed from the curse of the law, receive the adoption of sons." They are also redeemed from the power and dominion of sin; it shall not reign in their mortal bodies. They are redeemed to God: body, soul, spirit, substance, talents, all they have, and all they are, belong to the Lord: and when they have served him and their generation, during his appointed time, he will take them to himself, and they shall know the full meaning of that comprehensive phrase—ETERNAL LIFE. Such are the inestimable blessings which Jesus, the Redeemer of man, came to procure. But let us take another turn to Bethlehem, and see

III. *Satan ruined.*

It was Satan, the head of fallen spirits, who, assuming the form of a cunning serpent, seduced our first mother in the garden; and, employing her as the tempter of Adam, seduced our first father also. Thus were the flood-gates of sin opened in our world. Thus Satan usurped a sovereign authority over the souls of men; in so much that, in sacred writ, he is distinguished by the names of "the prince of this world;" yea, "the god of this world." He has set up an opposite throne to that of God; he rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, who are led captive by him at his will. Millions of souls have readily submitted to his chains, and have lived and died in love with their bondage. Cruel tyrant! who shall deliver us from thy destructive power?

It was when our fallen parents stood trembling before their Judge, expecting every moment to taste the threatened death: it was then that a dawn of mercy glimmered in the first gospel promise,

Gen.

Gen. iii. 14, 15. The LORD, turning to the serpent who seduced them, utters this curse—"Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life; and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." No doubt, the *devil* is here condemned, under the name of the serpent, because he had abused that creature in order to deceive man. He is cursed; for "everlasting fire is prepared for him and his angels." His power was to be contracted; he was to creep, not fly: his power should be restrained to *the dust*—that is, to *earthly-minded men*, or to the *bodies* of the saints. His *head* was to be bruised; that is, his power was to be finally destroyed by Jesus Christ; for so St. John expounds it—"The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil." The serpent's poison, craft, and life, are in his head; if this be bruised he is destroyed. Jesus Christ, in his temptation, baffled the tempter in all his cunning assaults. He cast out devils from the bodies of men: he enabled his disciples to do the same, and empowered them "to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy;" and he has promised also to his people, that "he will bruise satan under *their* feet shortly."

God also declared there should be "constant enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman," which includes the *sanctification* of all the elect. Unconverted men are at peace with the devil; but, when grace comes, war commences, and God will make the believer more than a conqueror.

But all this is in consequence of the birth of Jesus. He is most eminently "the seed of the woman," "the Son of God, made of a woman." By the merit of his death, and by the grace of his Spirit,

Spirit, he destroys the power of the old serpent, Satan was, indeed, allowed "to bruise his *heel*:" and he did so, by his agents, when he prevailed to procure the crucifixion of our Lord; but it was then, even then, that "he bruised Satan's *head*," and laid the foundation of his everlasting destruction. Never before did fallen spirits discover so much opposition to Christ. "They were aware, probably of Christ's design to overturn their empire; therefore they mustered all their forces, employed all their skill; and, as all was at stake, made one strong effort in a kind of decisive engagement. They armed every proper instrument, and set every engine at work—temptations, persecutions, violence, slander, treachery, and the like. Our Lord, whom they opposed, made no formidable appearance; he was despised of men, a worm, and no man. But this made the event more glorious. It was a spectacle worth the admiration of the universe, to see the despised Galilean turn all the artillery of hell back upon itself: to see one in the likeness of men, wresting the keys of hell and death out of the hands of the devil; to see him entangle the powers of darkness in their own net, and making them ruin their own designs with their own stratagems. They made one disciple betray him, and another deny him; they made the Jews accuse him, and the Romans crucify him. But these were the very means of spoiling and triumphing over themselves, Col. ii. 15. The cruelty of devils and their instruments was made subservient to the designs of infinite mercy, and the sins of men over-ruled for "making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness." *

Thus was "the prince of this world judged." Christ, by his death, "hath destroyed him that had the power of death," and rendered this evi-

* See *Maclaurin's* most admirable sermon on glorying in the Cross of Christ.

dent, by the miracles that attended his gospel, and the power of his grace in the experience of all believers. All the effects of satan's usurpation shall finally be abolished. Christ shall reign universally through the earth. Satan shall be bound for a thousand years; and, though loosed for a short season, shall be utterly cast out, and confined to hell. The grave shall resign all its dead, and Jehovah Jesus shall reign for ever—"The Lord God omnipotent." Glory, Glory, Glory be to him!

APPLICATION.

Having been to Bethlehem, to see this thing which is come to pass, let us now, like the shepherds, "return, glorifying God for all the things we have heard and seen." We have learned, that in the incarnation of the Son of God we may see *Deity displayed—Man redeemed—and Satan ruined*. How vast and glorious are these designs of a Saviour's birth! The angels knew this when they sang—"Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." But, are these purposes of his appearance answered as to *us*? Is God, in all his glorious perfections, manifested in the person of Jesus? Well, does this attract *our* notice, and engage our souls to adore, and love, and praise him, "magnifying the God of Israel?" "The Lord hath visited and *redeemed* his people." Are *we* among his redeemed? Are we actually redeemed from the guilt and power of our own sins, and from the follies and vanities of this world? The throne of Satan is shaken; but is his power in *us* abolished? Are *we* "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son?"

This is the way in which we are to consider this grand event; and, if the ends of Christ's birth, be answered in *our own experience*, we have abundant cause

cause for joy. But then it will not be the vain, frothy, carnal joy of the world. The manner in which some pretend to celebrate the birth of Christ, at the season called *Christmas*, is a disgrace to a Christian nation. They contradict, as much as possible, the design of his coming. He came "to destroy the works of the devil;" they try to keep them up. What have cards, dancing, songs, gluttony and drunkenness, to do with the birth of Jesus? He came to save his people *from their sins*, not *in them*. O let young people guard against the temptations of such a season; for there is more sin committed at Christmas in a few days, than in many weeks at other times; and the sin is the more aggravated, as it passes under the notion of religious joy. But it is an affront to a holy God, a reproach to the Christian name, and ruinous to the souls of men.

Let us rather go to Bethlehem: Let us, like Mary, "ponder these things in our hearts." No sooner did the shepherds hear of him, than they ran to enquire after him. Let us also say, "We would see Jesus." And where shall we seek him but in his house, in his word; and if we seek him earnestly, we shall find that the church of God is still a *Bethlehem*, "a house of bread." God will feed our souls with "the bread which came down from heaven, and which endureth to eternal life."

We may also *see* and *serve* him, in his poor members. "The poor we have always with us." As Christ was found in the stable, so we may find some of his in a cottage, in a garret, forsaken and destitute. Let us go and visit poor families, sick persons, fatherless children, in honour of him who was "wrapt in swaddling clothes, and lay in a manger;" he will accept the kindness, and say, "In as much as ye did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me."

The Cross of Christ The Christian's Glory.

A
S E R M O N

Q. N.

GAL. vi. 14.



God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.

THE Apostle Paul, whose words these are, had good reason for glorying in the cross of Christ. He tells us, in the text, how useful it was to him. And whoever obtains the true knowledge of "Christ crucified," will, like him "determine to know nothing else," and "esteem all things but loss for the excellency of it." It is well-known, that the cross of Christ was "a stumbling block" to the Jews: Nothing offended them so much as the plainness, the poverty, the sufferings and death of Jesus: But St. Paul gloried in the cross; yea, he would glory in nothing else. The Jews gloried in their relation to Abraham, in their temple, in their religious ceremonies; but he, who knew that these were but "shadows of good things to come," gloried in the substance, gloried in the cross of Christ.

"The cross of Christ" signifies, either *our sufferings for him*, or *his sufferings for us*. In the former sense, we are to "take up the cross, and follow him;" but here, we are to understand, *his sufferings for us*; for these are what the Apostle gloried in. "The cross of Christ" sometimes includes the whole gospel, the doctrine of him who died on the cross, of which, his meritorious death for sinners is the most principal part.

As the cross of Christ is of so much use to a Christian, let us *first*, Take a view of it, or contemplate the sufferings of Christ upon it; and then, *secondly*, Consider its practical uses, or the reasons we have for glorying in it.

I. Let us contemplate the sufferings of our Lord.

But how, or where, shall we begin? Let no one rush into this solemn work in a thoughtless manner. Few persons are properly prepared for it. A mind polluted with sensual pleasures, or a heart crouded with worldly cares, is ill-qualified for the task. When Moses approached the burning bush, he was commanded to take off his shoes, for the place on which he stood was holy ground. *Gethsemane* and *Calvary* are also holy ground. Let us approach with godly fear, not with vain curiosity; and may the good Spirit of God, the glorifier of Jesus, take these sacred things, respecting his "agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion," and so show them to us, as that we may repent, believe and rejoice!

We ought to remember, that the whole life of Christ was a life of suffering. He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." For our sakes he became poor, and endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. But we must now confine our meditations to his last sufferings, *in the garden; during his trial; and at Golgotha.*

Our blessed Lord having "loved his own which were in the world, loved them to the end;" and gave a most affecting proof of it, by washing their feet; celebrating the Passover with them; instituting the sacred Supper; and by his pathetic discourse and affectionate prayers. He then went forth out of the city, accompanied by all the apostles, except Judas, who was preparing to betray him, to a garden, where he used to retire, and had spent many nights in devotion. At the entrance of this, he

he left eight of the disciples, taking Peter, James and John, to a separate place, where they were spectators of his distress.

Then Jesus "began to be sorrowful, and very heavy"—to be "fore amazed"—the words signify much more than they express, "they imply that he was possessed with fear, horror and amazement; encompassed with grief, and overwhelmed with sorrow; pressed down with consternation and dejection of mind; tormented with anxiety, and disquietude of spirit."

How vast must that pressure have been, which obliged *him* to complain, and to complain to his inferiors—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He was in an "AGONY"—a word used no where else in the New Testament; an agony so great and astonishing, that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." In this extreme distress he betook himself to prayer; he first kneeled down, and afterwards fell on his face upon the ground, saying, "O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt."

What a mysterious scene is this! What could be the occasion of this agony? It was no human enemy that hurt him; nor was it the fear of his approaching death. Probably it was some peculiar conflict with the powers of darkness, for this was "their hour." Perhaps, the restraint usually laid on these malignant spirits, was now removed; and who can tell what terrors they may inflict, if permitted? Probably, our Lord had now before his eyes, the collected guilt of millions of sinners; and the intolerable misery due to their iniquities: and what an agony must this occasion, when an individual finds one "wounded spirit" more than he can bear?

Here stop, and see "the sinfulness of sin." Per-

haps you have seen it only in the garden of pleasure, wearing the mask of happiness: Here, in the garden of sorrow, behold sin stripped of its mask. See, in the agony of Jesus, its true nature and proper effects. "The wages of sin is death;" therefore, the soul of Christ was sorrowful, "even unto death." See here, a specimen of that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," which every soul of man, not interested in Christ, must suffer, not for a few hours, but to all eternity. And here, believer, see what thou must have suffered, if Jesus had not suffered it for thee. But "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief," that thou mayest be filled with joy unspeakable. He drank this bitter cup, that he might put into thy hand the sweet cup of salvation.

Our Lord, who knew before hand all things which should befall him, intimated to his disciples, the near approach of the traitor Judas. "Rise," said he, "let us be going; he is at hand that betrayeth me." This infamous man had sold his affectionate master to the priests; and, knowing the place of his retirement, comes attended with an armed force: yet, still pretending friendship, salutes him with a kiss, which was the appointed signal for his apprehension. Jesus offers no resistance, nor attempts an escape. The Lamb of God freely offers himself up, and, with surprising intrepidity and composure, tells them who he is. He could have slain them all in a moment, for he no sooner uttered the words, *I am He*, than his enemies drew back, and "fell to the ground," as if they had been struck with lightning. He asks nothing for himself, but desires a passport to ensure the safety of those slothful disciples, who had been too careless to watch with him one hour. He rebukes Peter for using his sword, and kindly heals the officer whom he had wounded. "Then all his disciples forsook him and fled."

Now

Now let us follow our Lord from the garden, through the streets of Jerusalem, bound and hurried along, as if he had been a thief, from one part of the city to another; first to the house of Annas, and then to the palace of Caiaphas, where, though it was night, the principal part of the Sanhedrim were met to receive their prisoner.

And here, what horrid injustice reigned. So innocent was he, that his enemies were forced to contrive to forge the shadow of a charge against him. They could scarcely find any villains hardy enough to come forward and accuse him. At length two witnesses arose, pretending that three years before, he had talked about destroying the temple, and rebuilding it in three days. This foolish charge, founded on a gross perversion of his words, was deemed sufficient ground of accusation. And accordingly, early in the morning, he was brought before the great council, and put upon his defence. But he thought proper to decline any vindication of himself, before bloody men, who were determined to murder him. Thus "he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

Being adjured, by the High Priest, to declare whether he was the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God, he affirmed it fully. These wretched hypocrites, taking the advantage of his confession, and pretending great concern for the honor of God, charged him with blasphemy, and immediately adjudged him to death.

But as the power of life and death was, in a great measure, taken from them by the Romans, instead of putting him to death by stoning, they took him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, who, at their request, proceeded to his trial. Here, with malignant cunning they charge him, not with blas-

phemy, but with *sedition*, refusing to pay tribute to Caesar, and calling himself a king, in opposition to the emperor. Our Lord was still silent; at which Pilate was astonished. Pilate having examined him privately, was satisfied of his innocence, and wished to discharge him. But the Jews increased in their vehemence against him, insisting upon it that he should be put to death. To which, at length, Pilate, an unjust, time-serving man, reluctantly consented.

Shocking were the insults which he endured at various times and places, from the officers of the priests, and from the soldiers. He was mocked, buffeted, spit upon, blindfolded, crowned with thorns, and most severely scourged. But thus was the Scripture fulfilled; for, it is remarkable, that every particular part of his sufferings was predicted long before by the prophets; and thus, under the influence of their own wicked passions, they, unwittingly, accomplished the divine decrees, "for to do whatsoever his hand and his counsel determined before to be done." Acts iv. 27.

And now, they speedily proceed to the execution of the unjust and bloody sentence. And he, bearing his cross, went forth to a place called Golgotha, or the place of a skull, for there the bodies of many criminals were buried. O, how different a procession was this, from one which had passed the streets a few days before. Then, the multitude welcomed him unto the city, shouting, Hosanna! now they hasten his death as a malefactor, crying "Away with him, crucify him." So little is popular applause to be regarded. A few, indeed, sympathise with our suffering Lord; but he, affected more with their future woe, than with his own present sufferings, says, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Fatigued, and ready to faint, with pain, loss of blood, and the weight of the cross, which he carried upon his bleeding shoulders, Cymon, a stranger,

is

is compelled to bear it for him. At length, they arrive at the place. It was "without the city;" in answer to the types of old, which required that the sin-offering should be made without the camp; and, as an example to us, that we should be willing to follow him "without the camp, bearing his reproach." The cross being laid upon the ground, the sacred body of our Lord, now stripped of all his garments, is laid upon it, stretched as upon a rack, and fastened to it with large spike nails, cruelly driven through his hands and his feet. The cross was then drawn upright, its foot being placed in a hole dug for the purpose. There our Lord hangs, the whole weight of his blessed body bearing upon the wounded parts of it. Not content with the corporal pains he endured, the cruel people endeavour to aggravate them by bitter taunts and reproaches. They amused themselves with his misery. They ridiculed his pretending to be the Son of God, and the king of Israel; his rebuilding the temple; they bid him "come down from the cross," and then they would believe on him; they tell him "to save himself," if he could save others. And in all this, the chief priests and scribes, forgetting their dignity, joined the unthinking rabble.

Thus "it behoved Christ to suffer," and thus "the scriptures were fulfilled." Thus was he "*lifted up*," like his type, the brazen serpent, in the wilderness. He was "cut off, but not for himself," as Daniel predicted. "They pierced his hands and his feet," as said the psalmist. He was "mocked, scourged, and crucified," as himself had before declared. "They cast lots for his garments," and "he was numbered with the transgressors."

In this painful situation our Lord continued for several hours; for it was a slow, lingering, and extremely painful kind of death. It was also *shameful* in the highest degree; a gallows and a gibbet are not names of greater infamy among us, than that
of

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

of the *cross* then was. It was also deemed an *accursed death*. By the law of Moses, a person hanged upon a tree, was deemed *accursed of God*. Alluding to this, St. Paul says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13.

Our Lord who, when at large, went about doing good, continued to manifest his benevolence, even upon the cross. He prays for his unfeeling murderers; "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." To the penitent thief he said, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He committed the care of his mother to John, his beloved disciple. All this was done while he suffered the most shocking pains. But the agony of his mind, it should seem, far exceeded them. He was suffering the wrath of God due to sin. The horrible darkness, that for three hours covered the land, was an emblem of the more dreadful darkness and terror of soul, which he endured; and which extorted that mysterious cry—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

But, the painful scene draws to a close. All the prophecies were fulfilled. All the Father gave him to do was accomplished. His sufferings therefore must terminate. Exulting, then, in the completion of his vast and glorious work, he cried, *it is finished*. And then, that, with his dying breath, he might teach us how to die, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" and having said thus, "bowing his head, he gave up the ghost," or "*dismissed his Spirit*."

Thus have we taken a brief view of the cross of Christ. We have seen the blessed Redeemer taken and bound as a thief; hurried from place to place through the night; unjustly condemned both in the ecclesiastical and civil court; treated with all the indignity and insult that hellish malice could devise; buffeted, scourged, and spit upon; and at length

put

put to death on the cross. In all this, the carnal eye beholds nothing but weakness, pain, and ignominy; but the enlightened eye of faith sees a beauty, a grandeur, a glory, far surpassing the brightest objects of sense. So far from blushing at the meanness or shame of the cross, the true believer will cordially unite with St. Paul, and say—*God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Let us then proceed to consider

II. The reasons we have for glorying in the cross.

Many reasons may be offered, but we have room to mention only three. By the cross of Christ, The perfections of God are displayed—the believing sinner is fully justified; and provision is made for his sanctification.

We glory in the cross of Christ because God is glorified in it. The *goodness, mercy, and love* of God appear, in all his gifts to men; but most of all in this *unspeakable gift*. Of no other gift is it said—“God so loved the world as to bestow it.” “Herein is love;” a love so great that it includes, and ensures, every other good, “for he that spared not his own son, but freely gave him up for us all, will assuredly deny us nothing good.” And, O, “the manifold wisdom” that beams from the cross. How deep the contrivance, to make “mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other.” Never did the spotless *holiness* and the inflexible *justice* of God appear with such awful splendor as at Calvary. Not all the sufferings of the damned can put such honor on the holy law, as it received from the sufferings of Jesus upon the cross: those sufferings “magnified the law and made it honorable.” Thus God “declared his justice in the remission of sins,” so that “the law as well as the sinner may justly glory in the cross of Christ; for both receive eternal honor from it.”

Again, That which endears the cross of Christ to
believers

believers is, that from thence they derive free and full justification; they are "justified freely, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." How glorious is that declaration—"The Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all!" That heavy burden, enough to crush a world, was borne by him; and, blessed be God, borne away by him; so borne away, that, if sought for, it shall not be found. We behold then in a crucified Saviour, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The real Christian will glory in nothing else. He places no dependence on his prayers, his repentance, his duties, his charity, his sufferings; all these are for ever discarded, in respect of justification by them. To trust upon these, in whole or in part, would be the greatest dishonor to Christ, and render his cross a needless useless thing. This he abhors from his heart, as the vilest blasphemy and sacrilege; and therefore sincerely says with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But there is another reason for glorying in the cross, namely, it is the cause and the instrument of our *sanctification*;—hereby the world is crucified unto us, and we are crucified to the world. Nothing but a spiritual sight of the glory of the cross, and a good hope of personal interest in its blessings, will ever effectually wean our hearts from the world. To be dead to the world, is of the utmost importance in the matter of our sanctification; for the love of the world is the principal source of our sins. We shall never cease to make the world our portion, till we get something better in its stead. It is by the doctrine of Christ we learn its vanity. It is by the example of Christ we learn to despise it. His whole humiliation from the manger to the cross, poured contempt on human greatness, and has sanctified to his followers a life of labour, poverty, and reproach. A true follower of Christ will be ashamed to glory in those wordly objects which his Saviour trampled beneath

beneath his feet, while it will sweetly reconcile him to a humble lot, that his master endured the same; and thus will he learn "to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus."

APPLICATION.

When the people who came together to see the doleful spectacle of the crucifixion, beheld the things that were done, they smote their breasts and returned. And surely, when we return from this view of the cross, and consider what we have seen and heard, we have reason to smite our breasts, and be deeply affected with our sins and his sufferings. Nature itself, seemed to sympathise with our suffering Lord. The sun was darkened. The earth quaked. The rocks were torn asunder. The veil of the temple was rent. The graves were opened; and the heathen guards were constrained to say, "Truly this was the Son of God!" And now, how are *our* hearts affected? Is all this "nothing to us?" Can we behold this awful scene with cold indifference? If we can, it may be feared our hearts are harder than the rocks, and that we have no part or lot in the matter. Surely this awful spectacle will command our attention, and excite our serious thoughts. Come, you who have loved and lived in sin, who have rolled it as a sweet morsel under your tongues, who have laughed at, and often said, what harm is there in it? Come, and see the Saviour in his agony, sweating blood: see him buffeted and despised; see him bleeding, groaning and dying on the cross. And what was all this for? It was for sin. It was to make atonement for sin. He died "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." It was to save such finners as you from eternal sufferings. Such was his love. O sinner, let this love constrain thee to forsake thy sins, and come to him that thou mayest have life.

When I am lifted up, said Jesus, before his crucifixion,

fixion, *I will draw all men to me.* O what blessed attraction is there in the cross of Christ! Here is salvation. A salvation complete and free: just such as a guilty helpless sinner needs. When Christ crucified was first preached by Peter, three thousand souls, and among them perhaps many of his murderers, were drawn to him in one day. To-day, by this sermon, he is lifted up; "crucified before your eyes." O for the power of the Holy Spirit, to draw your hearts to him! Come, and he will receive you. Come, and he will pardon you. Come and he will give you rest. His arms, once extended on the cross, are still open to receive the chief of sinners. His blood still cleanseth from all sin;

"Each purple drop proclaims there's room,
"And bids the poor and needy come."

And now, O that every professed disciple of Christ would consider the *latter* part of the text, and ask himself this question: "Is the world crucified to *me*, and *I* to the world?" Does the cross of my Saviour throw a salutary shade over the gaudy glories of the world. Is it crucified? Is it a dead, or at least, a dying thing, in my esteem; and am I, because of my attachment to the truth, cause and people of Christ, become like a dead man in the world's esteem? Such, brethren, in some happy degree, is the true influence of the cross of Christ. Such is the holy, practical tendency of gospel truth; and whoever finds this in himself, has abundant cause to glory in the cross of Christ.

May divine grace teach us, more and more, to esteem the cross of Christ, and to glory in nothing but our knowledge of it, interest in it, expectations from it, and its practical influence on our hearts. Then may we hope, ere long, to see "the Lamb that was slain, seated in the midst of the throne;" and, with our feeble voices, to make some little addition to the grand chorus of the redeemed, singing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and who hath redeemed us to God by his blood."

The Resurrection of Christ.

A
S E R M O N,

O N

LUKE xxiv. 34.

The Lord is risen indeed!

NEVER was there a day of greater gladness than that on which our Lord arose; never was there greater cause for joy: for were not Christ risen, our faith and hope would be in vain, and we should yet be in our sins.

When Jesus Christ was laid in the grave, great was the triumph of his enemies; great the dejection of his friends. The sorrowful disciples had fondly hoped, "it had been He who should have redeemed Israel;" but, now their hopes are buried in his grave. How great then must have been their surprise, and their joy, when Jesus actually arose, and appeared to several of them. Our text is an exclamation, expressive of these passions; it was made by the ten apostles, to the two brethren, who had seen Christ at Emmaus, and who had just returned from thence to relate the joyful news. Before they could well speak, the apostles salute them with this pleasing sentence—"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." The two disciples, in their turn, communicate what they had seen and heard, and how "Jesus was known to them in breaking of bread." Blessed and heavenly news! well might they all be eager to tell it. The primitive Christians, it is said; used to salute each other on the Lord's-day morning with these words, *The Lord is risen!* And

it is a pleasing custom still continued in London, that the boys belonging to Christ's Hospital, appear in Easter week, each with a printed label affixed to his coat, having the same inscription "The Lord is risen." Happy, if those poor children, or the multitude beholding them walk in procession to church, knew the sacred import of that charming sentence. It will be happy for us, if now we are taught "the power of his resurrection;" and so contemplate these precious words "that our faith and hope may be in God."

We may place the words of our text in three points of view, and consider them as the language of
WONDER—CERTAINTY—and JOY.

I. Let us consider the words as expressive of their *Wonder*.

And yet, we wonder it should appear so wonderful to them. Had not our Lord often told them he should rise from the dead? Had he not said "destroy this temple," meaning his body, "and in three days I will raise it up?" Had he not said, "There shall no other sign be given to this generation than the sign of the prophet Jonas; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth?" Could the disciples forget these sayings? The Jews certainly remembered them, and, therefore, sealed and guarded the sepulchre. There were many intimations of the resurrection in the writings of the prophets. It was evident from the scriptures, that "thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." Indeed, our Lord rested the whole weight of his mission on this event; to this he referred the whole credibility of all he asserted. It was, therefore, of infinite consequence to the disciples, that their Master should revive, and forsake the tomb.

But who can describe the state of their minds, when they saw their Lord in the hands of his foes;
bound

bound, tried, condemned, executed, and laid in the prison of the grave. There was much ignorance and unbelief remaining in them. They had not wholly got rid of their foolish notion of a temporal kingdom; but their hopes of this kind were now completely baffled. They might also have many distressing apprehensions about their own personal safety. In short, they were perplexed and distressed beyond measure; and they had either forgotten what Christ had said of rising again, or did not clearly understand it, or desponded as to the event.

Great, therefore, was their surprise and astonishment, when first informed of his resurrection. Mary Magdalene, and some other pious women, were the first witnesses of the fact; they ran to inform Peter and John, who immediately hastened to the spot; they found the tomb open, and the grave clothes left in it, but saw not Jesus. But Peter afterwards saw him. He made himself known to the two disciples at Emmaus on the same day. The news quickly spread among them all, and though they were "slow of heart to believe," they were constrained to admit the fact; but they were overpowered with surprise and astonishment, and this they expressed in the text, "The Lord is risen indeed!" But

II. These words imply *THE CERTAINTY of this important fact*, "The Lord is risen, *indeed*,"—strange as it is, it is true; it is absolutely certain; we are perfectly satisfied of it. And this certainty was immediately afterwards abundantly confirmed; for, while they were yet speaking, he appeared in the midst of them; and, to convince them he was not a mere spirit, not only shewed them his wounded hands and feet, but also ate and drank with them.

The certainty of this event is of the utmost consequence. This great pillar bears all the weight of the Christian system; and could the Samson of infidelity remove it, the whole fabric must fall to the ground. But, blessed be God, we have no fears on

this head. We know that "we have not followed cunningly devised fables," but that this grand truth comes to us confirmed by *many infallible proofs*, on which our faith securely rests, Acts i. 3. Let us examine some of these:

1. *The very fear of imposition* tended to this certainty. The chief priests having heard that Christ declared he should rise again, applied to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people; He is risen from the dead: So the last error shall be worse than the first." Matt. xxvii. 62. Pilate complied with their wishes. The huge stone that secured the entrance of the sepulchre was sealed with the public seal, which none might break upon pain of death; and a strong guard of soldiers was placed to defend the whole. But how vain it is for man to fight with God! The stone, the seal, the guard, can never keep the Lord of life a prisoner to death; but they all tended exceedingly to confirm the truth of his resurrection. Had these malicious precautions been omitted, we had lost one of the strongest proofs of the event.

The ignorance or the forgetfulness of the disciples respecting his rising again; their cowardice at the time, rendering them totally unfit to venture to steal the body, had they been so disposed; and their incredulity, when first told that he was risen; all unite in strengthening the evidence; but especially the unbelief of Thomas, who for a whole week persisted in refusing to believe any evidence but that of his own senses, which at length was granted.

2. *The number of witnesses* to the fact, strongly confirms it. Mary Magdalene was the first. Much was forgiven her, and she loved much; her love was rewarded with this honour. She first saw Jesus, and mistook

mistook him for the gardener; but she knew her Shepherd's voice, and owned her Lord, by whose direction she runs to tell the apostles. Next, he appeared to the other Mary, and Salome, when they were flying from the empty tomb, terrified at the sight of the angel. *Jesus met them saying, All hail!* they held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Peter was then favoured with a sight of his risen Lord. Marvellous kindness to the man who had deserted and denied him! Let it stand as a proof of Christ's regard to penitent backsliders. In the afternoon, on the same day, he joined company with two disciples, walking to a village seven miles from Jerusalem. They knew him not at first: but he talked to them—so sweetly opened the scriptures, and shewed the necessity of the resurrection, that their hearts glowed with holy fire. He condescended also to sup with them. It was then, while “he brake the bread and blessed it,” in a manner peculiar to himself, that they recollected his person. Fired with love, and filled with joy, they swiftly retrace the seven miles back to the city; and eager to publish the glad event, they hasten to the chamber of the apostles, where they relate “what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking bread.”

Immediately, “Jesus appears in the midst;” mild majesty beaming in his placid countenance, and heavenly consolation flowing from his lips, *Peace be unto you.* When they discovered fear, he added, *Why are you troubled? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.* And when he had spoken thus, he shewed them his hands and his feet; there they saw the certain marks of his sufferings, and his identity was fully proved. Nor did he immediately vanish; he continued with them a considerable time. He shewed them from the scriptures, the necessity of his resurrection; upbraided

them with their unbelief; and, to put the matter out of all doubt, he offered to eat with them, and did actually eat a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb. Luke xxiv. 42.

During forty days that followed this event, he met them frequently in different places, instructing them at large "in things pertaining to the kingdom of God." At one of these seasons, Thomas was perfectly convinced, and, with profound reverence and adoration, cries, "My Lord, and my God!" He appeared upon another occasion "to above five hundred brethren at once," most of whom were alive when St. Paul recorded it. 1 Cor. xv. 6. Surely it was impossible that all these witnesses could be deceived, and it is equally impossible they could mean to deceive others, for

3. *They were credible witnesses*, they were sufficient judges of what they saw and heard, and they could have no temptation to impose upon the world. No temporal advantage could be looked for; but, on the contrary, all the terrors of persecution, which many of them actually endured; but they lived and died stedfastly witnessing to this fundamental truth.

4. *The very Heathen admitted the fact*. Pilate wrote to Tiberius, the Roman emperor, assuring him that Christ, who was a very extraordinary person, and who had been put to death at Jerusalem, was risen again. And Tiberius proposed to the senate at Rome, that his name should be enrolled among the number of their Gods.

5. *The weakness of those who denied the fact*, tends to its confirmation. The soldiers, who composed the guard, being affrighted by the earthquake, which happened at the moment of the resurrection, ran into the city to inform their employers what had taken place. Upon which the elders called a council, to consider what must be done to prevent the belief of Christ's resurrection; when it was determined to bribe the soldiers, and put this lie in their

their mouths—"Say, ye, His disciples came by night and stole him away, *while we slept.*" What a palpable contradiction does this excuse contain! If the soldiers were asleep, how could they know this? and if they were not asleep, how could the disciples effect it? But they were *not* asleep. It was death to a Roman soldier to sleep on his watch. And who, that considers the cowardice of the disciples at the time, can ever believe that they would venture upon so difficult and hazardous a business? But the priests had the villainy to invent the lie, the soldiers had the baseness to propagate it, and the Jews had the folly to believe it; and justly may God give up men to "strong delusion to believe a lie," who will not be persuaded, even by miracles, to believe the truth.

Surely these are *infallible* proofs, and we may safely express our certainty of the event, by saying, "The Lord is risen, *indeed!*" The important fact being thus ascertained, let us, in the last place, consider the text, as

III. The language of Joy.

In prospect of this grand event the prophet says, Psalm cxviii. 24. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice therein." The world never saw such a day before. There was joy in heaven, and joy on earth. "A morning then dawned, which is to be followed by no evening; a brighter sun arose upon the world which is to set no more; a day began which shall never end; and night and darkness departed to return not again." "Then were the disciples *glad* when they saw the Lord;" and well they might! They had often seen him with delight, but never so much as now. Christ himself proposes this as an argument of joy—"I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

and was dead; and behold, *I am alive for ever more!* Amen." Consider we now the causes of Joy.

1. Hereby the truth of his mission was fully confirmed. This is the *Broad Seat* of heaven, affixed to his credentials; "The sign of Jonas the prophet," to which he referred. "He was declared to be the Son of God, *with power*, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. i.

4. He was publicly demonstrated to be the Son of God, by the immediate power of the Holy Spirit; owned in the face of the world, and freed from all suspicion of being an impostor.

2. The sufficiency and acceptableness of his sacrifice was hereby acknowledged. The apostle truly argues, 1 Cor. xv. 17. If Christ be not risen, we are yet *in our sins*—under the guilt and power of them, condemned for ever; since they could never be taken away but by the sacrifice of Christ, and if he were not risen, there could be no proof that he had taken them away. But, blessed be God, he is risen, that our faith and hope might rise too. *The God of Peace* hath brought again from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep; for he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. When he was discharged from the prison of the grave, God declared in effect, that the ransom price was paid, the full penalty of the law which required death was borne, justice was entirely satisfied, reconciliation was made, and pardon and peace procured through the blood of atonement.

Hence spring the lively hopes of the Christian. Thus Peter sang—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Thus Paul triumphed, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, *yea, rather that is risen again.*" Rom. viii. 33.

3. The

3. The resurrection of Christ is the cause of our spiritual resurrection, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. This is what St. Paul principally designed in that pious wish—That I may know *the power of his resurrection!* Phil. iii. 10.—to experience that divine power in my soul, quickening me to a life of grace, which Christ experienced in quickening his dead body in the grave; and, indeed, it requires a power no less. None but God can quicken a poor, lifeless, carnal soul, dead in pleasure, dead to God, dead in sin. But virtually, all believers were “quickened together with Christ:” the whole body was quickened together, the members with the head; and, in due time, by virtue of union with him, and the power of the Spirit in them, they shall be “planted together both in the likeness of his death, and of his resurrection;” that so, as “he died unto sin once, but now liveth unto God,” so shall they be “dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Rom. vi. 10.

4. The resurrection of Christ is a cause of joy, as it was introductory to his ascension to heaven, his intercession there, and setting up his new and everlasting kingdom. Immediately after he arose, he said to Mary—“Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” All this was no less necessary to our complete salvation, than his sufferings and death. Because he lives, his people shall live also. Because he intercedes, “he is able to save them to the uttermost.” Because he reigns, they shall be secured. Because he is enthroned, they also shall be glorified. The resurrection necessarily preceded all these, and therefore, with them, is a cause of joy unspeakable.

5. The resurrection of Christ affords to believers a certain pledge, and infallible assurance, of their joyful resurrection to eternal life. The one is inseparably

separably connected with the other; they stand or fall together; for, saith St. Paul, "If Christ rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?—we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. But now is Christ risen, and become *the first fruits* of them that slept." Jesus Christ arose as a public person; as the forerunner and representative of all his people. He arose as a mighty conqueror over death, and his resurrection was graced with that of many bodies of the saints, who appeared to their friends in Jerusalem, to testify the grand event. Thus, "as by Adam came death, by Jesus Christ came the resurrection of the dead;" and, as surely as the first fruits were gathered, so surely shall the whole harvest be safely collected. Of all that were given to Christ, the bodies of his people included, nothing shall be lost; and he has promised to raise them up at the last day, for "they are the children of the resurrection."

APPLICATION.

And now,—How are our hearts affected by this glorious subject? The first disciples were filled with joy; they congratulated each other, saying: "the Lord is risen indeed!" The fact is now familiar to us, so that the relation may not occasion wonder; but, are we satisfied as to the *certainty* of it. If it be *not* true, there is no truth in christianity. If it *be* true, then christianity is also true. The whole religion of Christ stands on this firm foundation, and is so connected with it, that every part is confirmed together with it. This establishes the whole revelation that he made of God, and heaven and hell. This ratifies all his doctrines concerning man as a sinner, and himself as a saviour. It confirms his authority to rule and govern the church; and it obliges us to believe that he will
fulfil

fulfil all his promises to his people, and all his threatenings to his enemies. And it especially strengthens our faith in the belief of the general resurrection at the last day. For, after *his* resurrection, thus evidenced, "Why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? All things are possible to him. He *can* raise the dead, for he is Almighty; and he *will* raise them, for he has promised to do so."

"There shall then be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." *All men* shall be raised. But, O, in what a different manner, and to what different destinations! Hear how Christ himself describes it. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." How important is our present state and conduct! We shall come forth from our graves such as we enter in; and how soon may we enter! What then is our present state? Are we convinced of sin? Humbled for sin? Have we believed in Jesus, and fled for refuge to him? Does our faith work by love, so that we *do good*? This is the proper fruit and evidence of faith, and what will be called over at the judgment day. O that then we may be "found in Christ," justified by his righteousness; while our faith in that righteousness is justified by its good and holy fruits.

The Lord is risen! Blessed and delightful truth! The Lord is risen, indeed! Then we may say with Job, "I know that my redeemer liveth," and, because he liveth, I shall live also. He is the resurrection and the life. Believing in him, though I were dead, yet shall I live; and now, living and believing in him, I shall *never* die. John 11. What have I to fear? God is reconciled; he is the God of peace, who raised up Jesus from the dead. Justice is satisfied,

fied, for the debt is discharged, and the prisoner released. If any accusation is made, I have "the answer of a good conscience, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead," for "who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again."

And if we are thus "risen with Christ, through the faith of the operation of God," let us "seek those things which are above;" let us "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Are we united to Christ? He is in heaven, preparing places for us; let us follow him in the affections and desires of our hearts. This world is not our rest and portion. "We are dead" to it, by profession and obligation, "and our life is hid with Christ in God." The life of grace is a secret life, of which Christ is the author and the keeper; and, "when Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory,"—When he who began, who supports, and will complete the spiritual life in us, shall appear as the judge of the world in all his glory, then shall our mortal bodies be quickened by his Spirit which dwelleth in us, and resemble his own glorious body; then shall the creature itself, (the animal frame,) be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and be introduced into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"With joy, like Christ's, shall every Saint
His empty tomb survey;
Then rise, with his ascending Lord,
To realms of endless day."

The Descent of the Holy Ghost.

A
S E R M O N

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And they were filled with the Holy Ghost.

AMONG the ancient predictions of gospel times and gospel blessings, the prophecy of Joel is none of the least—"It shall come to pass in the last days," saith God, "*I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh,*" &c. St. Peter, under the immediate influences of that Spirit, assures us in this chapter, verse 16, that the promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost—"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." John the Baptist, the harbinger of Christ, had also said to his disciples, "I indeed baptize you with *water*, but he shall baptize you with *the Holy Ghost*, and with *fire*." Our Lord himself comforted his disciples with a fresh promise of this great blessing, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, which is the Holy Ghost; the Spirit of truth; who shall teach you all things; who shall be in you, and abide with you for ever." John xiv. 16, 17, 26. Our risen Saviour, when just about to ascend up to glory, renewed the promise, assuring them it should be fulfilled in a few days, and commanded them to abide in Jerusalem till it was accomplished. In dependence upon his word, and expectation of the blessing, "they all continued, with one accord, in prayer and supplication."

The joyful day arrived.—It was the *Lord's Day*—It was also the day of *Pentecost*; a day observed by the

Jews in memory of giving the law at Mount Sinai, about 1500 years before. On this day they presented the first fruits of their harvest to God. How highly was this day honoured! A new sanction was given to the observation of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath;—the law of faith was first published from Mount Sion; and the first fruits of a glorious harvest of saved sinners were presented to God. And thus our Lord, who had been crucified at the Passover feast, fifty days before, was glorified at the feast of weeks; upon both which occasions there was a vast assemblage of people at Jerusalem.

“The day of Pentecost was fully come;” The disciples, obedient to their Master’s order, were assembled together, with unanimous affection, in the same place, waiting for the promised comforter; when “suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.” This was not only to engage their attention, but to serve as an emblem of the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men; for by the energy of his sacred operations the whole world was to be shaken. Our Lord had made use of the emblem of wind, or air in motion, when he discoursed with Nicodemus on regeneration—“The wind bloweth where it listeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” As the wind, or air, is the food of natural life, so is the Holy Spirit the beginner and supporter of spiritual life. Thus Jesus, after his resurrection, “*breathed* upon the apostles, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” John xx. 22. Perhaps he alluded to the creation of man at first, when “the Lord God *breathed* into his nostrils *the breath of life* (or lives), and man became a living soul.” Gen. ii. 7. As the *vital air* is necessary to our existence in the body, so the Spirit of God is necessary to our spiritual existence, or living to God. There was a striking emblem of the same kind, in the parable of the dry bones, Ezek. xxxviii. When Ezekiel, according to
God’s

God's command, prophesied to them, "*there was a noise, and a shaking; the bones came together; the flesh came upon them; and the skin covered them; but there was no breath in them*: then the Lord said, Prophecy to the wind, and say, Come from the four winds, O breath of the Lord, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." This parable, or vision, fitly represents, not only the political state of the Jews and their recovery, but also the deplorable condition of men, dead in trespasses and in sins, and their revival to spiritual life by the word and Spirit of Christ; and it shows there may be a lifeless form of godliness, but that the power and life is from the Holy Ghost, "for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." This great truth seems to have been intimated by "the mighty rushing wind."

Another very remarkable sign accompanied the descent of the Spirit on the disciples—"There appeared unto them *cloven tongues, like as of fire*, and it sat upon each of them;"—a bright appearance over the head of each, resembling a tongue, terminating in several points—a very suitable emblem of the "gift of tongues," which was then granted to them; for, at that moment "they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with *other tongues*, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The intention of this miracle was to enable them at once, to speak the language of every country to which they might be sent to preach the gospel; and this ability was attained, not in the ordinary and slow way of learning a foreign tongue, as we do, but in a moment, as an attestation to the truth of the gospel. The dividing of tongues at Babel, proved the unhappy means of losing the true knowledge of the true God; but by this new division of tongues, the knowledge of God in Christ was restored, and readily communicated to men of every nation. A specimen of this was immediately afforded: for, as this happened at the time of a great festival, there were then in Jerusalem devout Jews, who did

not usually reside there, but *sojourned* there, having visited the temple from all parts of the known world; and when, upon the report of what had happened, the multitude were gathered together, they were quite confounded and amazed; for every one of this various assembly heard one or other of the apostles and disciples, as they addressed themselves by turns to people of a different language, speaking to them in his own proper dialect. And they were all amazed at this wonderful event, knowing that the speakers were all Galileans: yet, did they, who before knew no language but their own, speak to this mixed assembly in a great variety of tongues.

This was a wonderful testimony to the truth of the gospel which they preached; and it was intended to put an honour upon preaching the word: it is the appointment of God for the conversion of sinners; it is “the power of God to salvation;” and therefore the first miracle, after the spirit was given, was to enable his servants to preach it.

The tongues were of *fire*. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled—“he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with *fire*.” And does not this emblem denote the *illuminating* and *animating* nature of divine truth?—When the gospel is attended with the power of the Spirit, it both *enlightens* and *warms* the heart. Gospel truths are not cold speculations; they afford both light and heat; they purify the mind, purge away the dross of sensuality, and make the soul mount heavenward. Thus the hearts of the two disciples “burnt within them,” when Jesus walked with them, and opened up the scriptures. Come, O celestial flame, come and sit upon *us* also; enlighten *our* darkness, purify *our* affections, consume *our* corruptions, and fill *us* with thyself!

And do not these *tongues of fire* speak a lesson to all the *ministers* of the gospel? Do they not intimate the manner in which they ought to preach the truth?—Not with cold indifference or frozen formality, but like

like John, who was "a burning and a shining light," with fervency of spirit, and vigor of affections, as men in earnest, believing and feeling what they speak, anxious for the glory of Christ, and eager to win souls.

What was the *subject* which first engaged the heaven-taught tongues of the disciples?—*The wonderful works of God.* "We do hear them speak in our own tongues—the wonderful works of God"—the great things of God—the magnificent, stupendous things of God. And what were they? Surely they were those "things of Christ" which the Spirit was given to show them, that they might "glorify him;" the person, miracles, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, together with this effusion of the Spirit; in a word, the glorious salvation of the Son of God; and these will always be the favourite topics of those ministers whose tongues are touched with the flame of the altar.

The multitude who witnessed this remarkable scene were all in a mixture of amazement and perplexity, and said to one another, What can this mean? The pious and devout were thus affected; but their minds were prepared to listen to the voice of God, as soon as they were convinced it was his. Others, probably the native Jews, who understood none of these foreign languages, and heard only unintelligible sounds, derided them, ascribing their preaching to intoxication. "These men," said they, "are full of new wine." Let us not wonder if, in our day, the preaching of the gospel is treated in the same manner. There always have been mockers, to whom the gospel of Christ has been foolishness.—The Lord pity and pardon them!

Then Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, standing up with the eleven apostles, lift up his voice, and addressed the multitude. He begged them to have so much candour, as not rashly to conclude them to be men overcome with liquor, especially by nine o'clock in the morning; an hour in which, it should seem,

6 THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

no Jew was ever known to be drunk. But he directs their attention to a well-known passage of scripture, a prophecy of Joel, in which the Lord says—*It shall come to pass, in the last days, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit, and they shall prophecy: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* The apostle declares this prophecy to be then fulfilling; and proceeds to shew them that Jesus of Nazareth, whom God approved among them by many miracles, and whom they had lately crucified, was the true Messiah, the Son of God; and that, while they gratified their own wicked passions in putting him to death, they had fulfilled the divine decrees concerning him. But that all their malice had been in vain, for God had raised him up, according to the prophecies of David. Peter declares himself and his brethren witnesses of his resurrection from the dead, and affirms that his divine Master, having ascended to heaven, had sent down, on that day, the promised Spirit, whose operations on his disciples they now beheld.

The design of this sermon was to convince them of sin, which is the first work of the Holy Spirit; and the Lord crowned it with vast success. Multitudes were pierced to the heart with a sense of their guilt, and especially with the guilt incurred by the murder of Christ; and, filled with terror and perplexity, they applied to the apostles for advice, saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter, agreeably to the Lord's direction, "preached repentance and remission of sins in his name, beginning at Jerusalem." Here is a fine specimen of gospel preaching: he exhorts the vilest sinners to repent; encouraging them thereto by the hope of the full pardon of all their sins, upon be-

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lieving in Jesus; "and with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

Wonderful was the success of this day—three thousand souls converted to God at once! Most of them, probably, bigotted Jews, ignorantly attached to the law of Moses, and bitter enemies of Jesus Christ.—Many of them, perhaps, had cried, "Crucify him, crucify him!" and had said, "his blood be upon us and upon our children." Surprising grace! What mercy, what power, was that day displayed! What cannot God do? Three thousand *converted*; not merely alarmed, but changed in heart. Their sincerity was manifest: they sacrificed all their worldly interest to Christ: the pardon of sin filled their hearts with gladness: they were all love and liberality: and they continued stedfast in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers; praising God, and having favour with all the people."

Glorious confirmation, this, of the truth of the gospel! Delightful encouragement to the preachers of it! Charming specimen of its happy effects, and blessed first fruits of an extensive harvest! O for another out-pouring of the blessed Spirit upon the churches! Such we expect, in fulfilment of many precious promises. In the mean time, may we be the happy subjects and witnesses of the ordinary work of the Spirit in the conversion of sinners, and in the edification of the saints. And this *stated work* of the Holy Spirit is what we shall now, in the second place, consider.

We have taken a brief view of the glorious events which took place on the day of Pentecost. We have seen the apostles, and probably the rest of the hundred and twenty disciples, endued with the gift of tongues. This gift, together with the power of healing diseases, casting out devils, with many other miraculous

raculous works, was long continued in the church; perhaps above an hundred years. These are generally called the *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit. These have long since ceased. When Christianity was established, there was no longer occasion for them. But, have *all* the operations of the Spirit ceased? Some say so; but we deny it. We allow that the *extraordinary powers* just mentioned are withdrawn; but we affirm, and think it an affirmation of prime importance, that the *gracious influences* of the Holy Spirit, on the minds of believers, are still continued, and that there is no true vital religion without them.

The *extrardinary gifts* at first possessed by Christians, did not, necessarily, imply those *gracious influences* for which we plead. It is probable that some had the former, who were destitute of the latter; for St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. &c. seems to intimate, that a person might speak with various tongues, have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, and work miracles, and yet not have *love*, an eminent "fruit of the Spirit:" from which we conclude, that the ordinary and gracious operations of the Spirit upon the souls of men may be continued, although his miraculous gifts are withdrawn; and we shall prove that the former are promised to be continued in the church, and that they are now as necessary to make men Christians, as they were in the apostles' days.

When our Lord promised to send his Holy Spirit to his disciples, he assured them that he should *abide with them FOR EVER*, John xiv. 16.—he was to *abide*—to continue with them, not for three or four years, as our Lord had done, but *for ever*; and as this presence of the Comforter was to supply the place of Christ on earth, we may safely conclude, that the promise extended not to the apostles only, but, like his intercession, John xvii. 20. "to them also who should believe on him, through their word," even unto the end of the world.

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The Holy Spirit is promised, John vii. 38. as the common privilege of all believers.—“He that believeth in me, out of his belly, or heart, shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.” This promise is not confined to believers of the first century, or to the age of miracles; it is as much a promise to believers at large, as any other in the New Testament. A similar promise is made, John iv. 14.

The Holy Spirit is said to *dwell* in believers, 1 Cor. iii. 16. and vi. 19. “The Spirit of God dwelleth in you;” “your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.” This is spoken to the whole body of Corinthian Christians, without a single hint that the blessing was intended to be confined to them, or to Christians of that age only. Were we to admit that expressions of this kind, respecting the Spirit, must be confined to the first believers, we should be obliged to admit the same restriction as to all the privileges, tempers, and duties of Christians in general. And indeed, those who deny the work of the Spirit, do generally give up all the essentials of the gospel, and leave us nothing but a system of mere morality—a refined heathenism, graced with the name of Christ. And we may seriously “advise persons to be cautious of confining the Spirit to primitive times, lest they confine heaven to primitive times, and so miss of it themselves; for indeed there is no going to heaven without receiving the Holy Spirit.”

This will appear still more clearly, if we consider *for what purposes* he is given to the church: we shall then see that there is always the same occasion for his gracious influences as there was at first.

The whole dispensation of the gospel is called—*The ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. The whole business of gospel salvation, from first to last, is in the hands of the Spirit. Not only at first, but in all ages, he calls, qualifies, and assists the ministers of the gospel in preaching it; and all its efficacy in the world is from the power of his grace.

Illumination

Illumination is his work. No truth of the gospel is rightly understood but by his teaching. He was promised as "the Spirit of *Truth*," who was to "glorify Christ," by "showing the things of Christ" to men. This is fully proved by those words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man (that is, every man by nature) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned:" that is, they are known only by the teaching of the Spirit, in the use of the word. Now, as all real Christians are illuminated and taught of God, it is evidently necessary that they should all have the Spirit: and if the Spirit be not given, then no man in the world knows, or can know, the things of God.

Again, all real Christians are *praying persons*; but no man knows "how to pray, nor what to pray for," without his assistance; and therefore it is mentioned, Rom. viii. 26. as the common privilege of all believers, that "the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities" in this duty; which shews that all Christians, in all ages, need the influence of the Spirit.

Our Saviour, in his discourse with Nicodemus, (John iii.) strongly insisted on the necessity of *regeneration*, or the new birth, solemnly declaring, that "unless a man be born again, or born of the Spirit, he could not be saved." This then shows, that every Christian must needs have the Spirit, for he is the author of that inward change, without which no man is inwardly a Christian.

Sanctification is also the privilege of all true believers; they are "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through *sanctification of the Spirit*." 1 Pet. ii. 2. No man can be saved who is not sanctified, and no man can be sanctified but by the Spirit.

The Holy Ghost was promised "to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." But will any person say, it is less necessary now to be convinced of sin, &c. than at first? Can there be any repentance

repentance without it? Certainly not: and if not, then the Spirit is as necessary as ever.

He is also called the *Spirit of Faith*.—He is the *Comforter*, the *Seal*, the *Witness*, the *First Fruits* of heaven. No man then can have faith in Christ, spiritual joy and comfort, nor any evidence for heaven, unless he have the Holy Spirit. This might be more abundantly proved from a great number of texts and arguments, but the narrow limits of a short sermon forbid.*

APPLICATION.

Have ye received the Holy Ghost? said St. Paul, to some early disciples. We ask the same question—*Have ye received the Holy Ghost?* We have proved the necessity of his sacred influences; do we know any thing of them by experience? Remember what the scripture says, Rom. viii. 9. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” And how awful must their portion be, who are not his! The whole world is under the dominion either of the good Spirit of God, or of the evil spirit, “who worketh in the hearts of all the children of disobedience.” It is therefore of the greatest importance for us to consider, under whose influence we act.—“If we sow to the flesh, we shall reap corruption; if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.” By our fruits are we known. “The fruits of the Spirit are love, and joy, and peace, and goodness, and meekness, and temperance.”—“The works of the flesh are adultery, fornication, hatred, drunkenness, &c. and they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” What does our conduct say? O con-

* The necessity of Divine Influences is displayed, in a very pleasing manner, by Mr. T. Williams, in his book, called, “An historic Defence of Experimental Religion, as supported by the authority of Scripture, and the experience of the wisest and best men in all ages,” &c.

science be faithful—give a true verdict! Does it appear that you are a stranger to his grace, in enlightening the mind, renewing the will; convincing of sin, leading the soul to Christ, and sanctifying the whole man? Know then, that your state is deplorable and dangerous. May you be sensible of it: and, if you are, you will earnestly pray to God to give you his Spirit, which he has promised to them that ask him.

To those who know the Lord, the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost will appear exceedingly glorious. Such persons will rejoice to think that his gracious influence is still continued in the church. Above all, they will be continually desirous to experience it. All the light, love, peace, joy, and consolation to be found in the religion of Jesus, spring from his constant operations. Honour, then, this blessed Spirit, by seeking his daily assistance.—When you pray, read, hear, or perform any spiritual action, seek his help. Thus shall you “be filled with all joy and peace in believing;” thus shall “the love of God be shed abroad in your hearts;” thus shall you “abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost;” and having this experience, you possess “the seal” of God, and “the earnest” of heaven; “for he that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who hath also given us of his Spirit.” This is the grand evidence of our being Christians indeed; and “hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”

To the blessed Spirit of all grace; to Jesus Christ the only Saviour; and to the Father of mercies; the one covenant-God of our salvation, be glory, in all the churches, world without end. Amen.

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“Let thy kind Spirit in my heart

For ever dwell, O God of Love!

And light and heavenly peace impart,

Sweet earnest of the joys above.”

Christ our Benefactor.

A
S E R M O N

ON

ACTS x. 38.



—Who went about doing good.

By the Rev. SAMUEL GREATHEED.*

THE apostle Peter said this of our Lord Jesus Christ. The occasion of his saying it shows us that the Spirit of God works upon the minds of men, and inclines them to serve him, even before they know how to serve him in a right manner. In this case, they are very glad and thankful to be taught the will of God. Do you, brethren, wish to know how you may please God, and become "wise to salvation?" If we did not wish to do you good we should not come to you. The Lord is altogether good, and is always doing good. We may surely hope he will do us good now, if we are truly desirous of knowing his will.

We find, from this chapter, that the words of the text were spoken by Peter to Cornelius, who was an officer in the Roman army, and had been brought up

* This discourse was composed by Mr. Greatheed, solely for the use of some persons who visited the villages near Newport-Pagnell, Bucks, and who read written or printed sermons to the people, and before the publication of the first volume of Village Sermons; consequently without any intention of its publication from the press. But it appears in this volume by the particular desire of Mr. Burder, who wishes it to stand as a token of his unfeigned respect for the Author, and a memorial of their mutual friendship.

a heathen and an idolater. He was quartered among the Jews, who were the only nation at that time that knew there is only *one* God, who is eternal and holy. Cornelius learned from them this doctrine, which is the ground of all true religion; and he prayed to God, as every body should do, who believes there is a God. If *you* do not pray to God you are worse than the heathens, for they do not know there is a God to pray to. Besides this, we are told that Cornelius feared God with all his house. *Do you* try to lead your families and friends to know and serve God? If not, you see, that instead of being true Christians, you come far short of what Cornelius did, before he ever heard the gospel of Christ.

They who do not pray to God are without excuse, because God assures us, in his word, that he hears and answers prayer. The history of Cornelius gives a proof of it. The apostle Peter was preaching the Gospel at a place about forty miles distant from the town where Cornelius lived. The Lord informed Cornelius of this, and told him to send for Peter to come and instruct him. Peter accordingly came, and preached Jesus Christ to all who had met on the occasion; showing them how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; *who went about doing good*. He told them also much more about Jesus Christ; and, indeed, if he had not preached about Christ, he need not have come there. "Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" by whom alone a sinner can find mercy with God. Wherever the apostles went they preached Christ. This is one mark by which you may know who they are that preach most like the apostles. If you hear little or nothing about Christ, you are likely to get little or no good.

The apostle Peter informed Cornelius and his family, that the doctrine he had to deliver, was the same which they must have heard of, as it had been published

published throughout all the neighbouring country of Judea; and had, indeed, been first preached in Galilee, the country where they then were. You, perhaps, may think it strange, that Cornelius had not enquired about it sooner; but the reason probably was, that Christianity was then every where spoken against; the apostles and disciples of Christ were suspected, even by their own countrymen, the Jews, to be either mad or wicked men, because they worshipped God in a way different from that which was established by law; and because they continued preaching Christ to their neighbours, when it was opposed and forbidden by the great people and rulers. If you read the book of the Acts you will see this was the case; and you will not be surprised at it, if you consider that Jesus Christ himself was *crucified*, (which is like being hanged in our country) for both the rulers and the mob accused him of the vilest crimes. But the prejudices of Cornelius were now removed, and it was an excellent disposition which he discovered, when he said to the apostle, "Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." May the Lord give us, *now*, the same disposition!

One thing which Peter told Cornelius concerning Jesus Christ was, that "he went about doing good." If Cornelius had heard any thing of Christ before, it might be that he went about doing *harm*. Christ had been charged by the Jews with treason and blasphemy. He had been tried, condemned, and executed as a malefactor. Cornelius was likely, from the common report, to have a very bad opinion of Christ. He determined, however, to hear all that Peter had to say in behalf of Christ; and then to judge for himself. Let us all be careful how we take matters upon *hear-say*, especially about religion and religious people.

Peter convinced Cornelius that Jesus Christ went

about doing *good*. So far as you know the history of Christ, you are doubtless convinced, that he did not go about to hurt people, but to do them good. Even those ignorant and foolish persons who deny that Christ was sent from heaven, own that he did good in some respects. But what we should desire to know is, Whether he *can*, and *will*, do *us* good? If we do not obtain good from Christ in this life, and in that to come, we might as well never have heard of him.

As to the *power* of Christ to do *us* good, we have reason to trust in it, from the wonderful power he had to do good to all, as long as he was upon earth. His works were such as no man ever did before nor since. He satisfied the hunger of many thousands of people, with a very few small loaves and fishes. By merely touching or even speaking to weak and sick persons, he cured them of the most desperate diseases. He raised up several people from death to life; one man who had been buried some days, was restored to his afflicted relations. In that age of the world, when God was so little known, the devil was worshipped by many; and he was permitted to torment the bodies of mankind in a shocking manner: but no wicked spirit could keep possession of any person who was brought to Christ for relief. One word from him was enough to restore any one to perfect health and reason. The power of Christ was also shewn in preserving his disciples in a dreadful storm at sea. He said to the wind and the waves "Be still," and they became perfectly calm in a moment. But it is not possible now to tell you a hundredth part of the proofs that Jesus gave of his power to do good to those around him. The four Gospels are full of such accounts; yet, at the close of the last, St. John says, "there were also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should

should be written." People in general are fond of reading and hearing wonderful things. Now there is no true history, nor scarcely any story that contains things so wonderful as those which Jesus did for the good of mankind. Yet they are all certainly true, for they were written by four different persons, who saw what they relate; who were honest and good men: who did good like their Master; and suffered themselves to be put to death rather than deny what they knew to be true, or keep silence about it. You would do well, as often as you can, to take up your bibles, and read the history of Jesus Christ; and also consider whenever you read it, what was his reason for doing good in such surprising ways? Why was the history of his actions written over and over again, and handed down to us, so many hundred years after? The whole must surely be meant for *our* good. It would be tantalizing you to tell you of his doing so much good to others, if *you* could get no good from him. You suffer pains and wants; your relations and neighbours are afflicted; if Christ was now upon earth, he might do them the same good he formerly did to others. But if you read the scriptures with care, you may see that Jesus took more pains to *teach* people than to heal them. He performed all these miracles to gain their attention, and their belief of what he taught. His doctrine could do them much greater good than the healing of their diseases. If you could be certain that God forgave all your sins, and would give you eternal life, would you not think it a greater benefit than merely to be cured of a bodily complaint? The doctrine of Christ was, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." And, accordingly, he healed one man of the palsy, on purpose to shew he could forgive his sins. When the poor creature was brought to our Lord, his first words to him were,

"Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Some who were present murmured at his pretending to forgive sins; but he soon silenced them. "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," said he, turning to the poor man, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house." And immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all. See the 2d chapter of St. Mark.

Now, brethren, what think ye of the *power* of Christ to do good? Nothing could be more true or just than the principle upon which the Jews reasoned among themselves—"Who can forgive sins, but God only?" But you see our Lord Jesus Christ *did* forgive sins; and proved his power to do so, by working a miracle. It is plain, therefore, that Jesus Christ is God. All of you have, probably, been told so from your infancy; but now you see it cannot be otherwise. On this account, the Scriptures call him "*Immanuel*," which signifies "*God with us*:" they also call him "*the Son of God*;" having the same nature with his Father; and they declare that "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father," for He and the Father are one: they also call him "*the word of God*," and then say "*the word was God*."

Now as our Lord Jesus Christ is "God over all, blessed for evermore," his power to do good must be boundless, and always the same. You have seen that he worked a miracle to prove that, whilst on earth, he had power to forgive sins; and surely, now he is exalted to heaven, he must have the same power. If, whilst he was on earth, in the form of a servant, he had this power, you cannot reasonably doubt that, now he reigns in heaven, king of the world, "he is able even to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by him."

And do you not all *need* his pardoning mercy? Have you not transgressed his holy law? Remember

it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things, commanded in the book of the law, to do them." Galatians iii. 10. If you have obeyed it in *some* respects, or even in *most* things, this will not excuse you for having disobeyed or neglected it in others. The law of God admits of no composition; and makes no allowance for any failure whatever. The apostle James assures us (chap. ii. verse 10.) that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, excepting in *one* point, and offends in that, he is guilty of all." And the reason he gives for this is, that it is the same authority which enforces each of the commandments; so that whoever disobeys any one of them tramples upon all the authority of God. Instead, therefore, of enquiring who can forgive sins but God, it might be asked, How can God himself forgive sins committed against that law which he himself hath given to mankind for the rule of their conduct, and by which he has appointed that men should be judged?—This question must for ever have perplexed a convinced sinner, if the Gospel had not told us that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:" for "God made him to be a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2. Cor. v. 19, 21. On this ground there is encouragement to hope for pardon. "There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared." Yea, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." So that, if any of you have been distressed and terrified on account of your sins, you see it is not right for you to *despair* of forgiveness. Christ was crucified, that he might bear the punishment due to your sins; and, after being buried, he performed the greatest miracle of all, in raising up his own body, by his own power, from the grave; in order that he might prove he had fully discharged the

the debt which sinners had incurred. He afterwards ascended up to heaven; and, in some of his last words to his disciples, said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 15, 16. We are all under condemnation; for all have sinned. No obedience that we can pay in future to the law of God, can make amends for past sins. But Christ has power to forgive them, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." When a certain person came to Christ on earth, he seemed to doubt his power to help, saying, "If thou *canst* do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Jesus said unto him, "If thou *canst believe*, all things are possible to him that believeth." "Lord," answered the poor man, with tears, "I believe; help thou my unbelief!" So, under your fears about the possibility of your sins being forgiven, go to Jesus by prayer; plead that he has said, "He that believeth shall be saved," and cry, "Lord, I believe, help *thou* mine-unbelief."

I hope you are now satisfied as to the *power* of Jesus to do you good. If so, it should be your chief concern to know whether he is *WILLING also to do you good*, and *all* the good that you need. May the Spirit of Christ make you as earnest on this point, as reasonable creatures, with the word of God before them ought to be! What would it profit you, if you could gain the whole world, and should lose your own souls? You think, perhaps, but little of this *now*. But you are near the hour of death; you don't know *how* near. And if you have your reason then, you will wonder how you could have been so stupid through your lives, as not to be concerned, above all things, to know whether Christ was willing to save your souls. It may *then* be too late, and
you

you would, in vain, give the whole world for a few minutes time like those which we yet have to spend together. But, "now," I have to declare to you, from the Scriptures, "*now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation." "O seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near!"

You have heard that Jesus Christ is the ever blessed God: be assured then, from the gracious character in which God has revealed himself in his word, that he will not despise any soul that is truly humbled and contrite on account of his sin. "The tender mercy of God is over all his works." You see, every day, what compassion he shows to the evil and unthankful. His rain descends, and his sun-beams shine on the land of the wicked, as well as on that of the good. And has he less compassion on your *souls* than on your bodies? By no means. He desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. "Turn ye," said the Lord to the rebellious house of Israel, "turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" How long, already, has God delayed avenging himself upon us for sins! Why?—"Not that he is slack concerning his promise, but that he is long-suffering to us-ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance:" "For except we repent, we must all perish;" but a godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation.

You have heard that "*God was manifested in the flesh*," in the person of Jesus Christ. Astonishing as it is, it is certain, that he took upon him the form of a servant, suffered infirmity, want, contempt, persecution, and a shameful, miserable death. So wonderful an event must answer some good purpose. The prophecies of the Old Testament concur with the sayings of our Lord himself, and his apostles, in the New Testament, to teach us what was the design

sign of the sufferings and death of Christ. "He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." Isa. liii. 4, 6. "I am the good shepherd," said Jesus, "I lay down my life for the sheep. They shall never perish, but I give unto them eternal life." John x. "Whom God hath set forth," says the apostle Paul, "to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 25, 26. And can any one believe that Jesus humbled himself as a man, and suffered as if he had been a malefactor, for the sole purpose of *saving sinners*; and yet suspect that he will *refuse salvation* to those that seek it from him? It was for "the joy" of saving sinners that he "endured the cross, disregarding the shame." Well may it then be said, that "there is joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth." May you now believe in Christ, that he may "see of the travail of his soul," in your salvation, "and be satisfied."

Consider what is said in the text, "*He went about doing good.*" He not only never rejected one request for help, of all the numberless persons who applied to him, but he went about, in order to "seek and save that which was lost." He travelled for this purpose on foot, with much weariness and faintness, from one end of the land of Canaan to the other, again and again. He compares himself to a shepherd, who seeks far and wide for a poor wandering sheep, that never could have found its way back to the fold. So his willingness to do good to sinners.

sinners is still proved, by his command to those who are intrusted with the Gospel, that they should preach it to all mankind; by his providence, in sending his disciples throughout the world, without which, the Gospel would to this day have been unknown in England; and by the influence of his Spirit upon the hearts of all them who are made willing in the day of his power, to lay hold on the hope set before them; for what but the sovereign grace of God makes any of *you*, who long for his salvation, to differ from the rest, who reject it to their everlasting destruction. If *we* feel any love to God, it is "because he first loved us;" and he hath said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Brethren, the Scriptures inform us that, beside the two great purposes for which, as we have observed, Christ came into this world, there was a *third*. He came, not only to declare to us the will of God, and to offer himself up for the pardon of our sins, but also—"To leave us an **EXAMPLE**, that we might walk in his steps." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." We are unworthy to be called *Christians* if we do not *imitate* him. Let us set his bright and blessed example before us, as the text holds it forth. Let us do all the *good* we can to those around us, both to their bodies and their souls; yea, even to "our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers;" but especially to our relations and friends, and to those who serve God.—Let us remember Christ's labour and patience in *going about* to do good to those, who either could not or would not come to him to receive it. *We* are humbly trying to follow our Lord Jesus Christ, in coming *here* to do you good. Our consciences bear us witness that we earnestly desire your welfare, and have no other end in view. We know nothing that
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can do you *greater* good, than to lead you to think more of God and eternity; and to promote in you the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. We hope that God is visiting you by our means; and that he will, by his Spirit, make this meeting useful to your souls.

If you remain strangers and enemies to God, it is not for want of the power or willingness of Christ to do you good. Do not forget what has been said to you on this subject. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves, living sacrifices to him, holy and acceptable, which is your reasonable service." If you do *not*, every mercy you have received, and the very means of instruction you have now had, must appear against you at the day of judgment.

But, if your hearts are now seriously affected with what you have heard; if you feel yourselves to be guilty and helpless creatures; if you earnestly desire the pardon of your sins, through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to have your minds renewed, and made like the mind that was in him; these things should encourage you to pray to Christ, to depend upon his grace, and to rejoice in the fulness of his salvation. We shall be extremely glad to find that this is the case with any among you; for we know, that "he who begins a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ."—"Now, to Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy: to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

5 DE 60

The Christian Temper.



A
S E R M O N,

ON
PHILIP. II. 5.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

WHOEVER takes a view of Christianity, as displayed in the precepts and example of Christ, its great founder, must acknowledge it to be a very lovely religion; admirably calculated to promote the happiness of man in the present world, as well as to secure his eternal salvation in the next.

"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"—to save them "~~from their sins:~~"—not only to deliver them from the wrath to come, which is the wages of sin, but also to restore in them the holy image of God, which they had lost by their fall in Adam. He came, not only to restrain the practice of sin, but to purify the fountain of the heart, from whence the streams of sinful practice proceed.

To effect these great designs, he became a sacrifice for sin; he was made sin for us; he died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He procured for us, and sent down to us, the Holy Spirit, the great sanctifier of the church. And having given to the world the purest precepts that were ever delivered, he gave infinite force to them, by a perfect example of purity, in his own temper and walk, and has left us this example for our imitation.

All true Christians are followers of Christ; they must walk even as he walked; and in order to this,

They must possess the same holy temper ; or, as it is expressed in the text, " the same mind," must be in them, which was in Christ Jesus. This mind, or disposition, is the subject of the present discourse. May the good Spirit of God explain it to us, and produce it in us !

We might express the whole in a single word. **LOVE** is the mind of Christ ; for " God is Love." The whole law is fulfilled in love : love to God, and love to man. This filled the heart of the great Redeemer, actuated him in the whole of his obedience and sufferings, supported him under them, and rendered them acceptable, meritorious and efficacious to the salvation of the church. This is the mind that was in Christ ; this his prevailing disposition ; and the principal part of our holiness consists in being like him, and living under the daily influence of love to God and love to man. But it is necessary to be more particular, and to consider the christian temper in its several branches. We begin with,

1. HUMILITY. This deserves the first place, both because it is that grace in Christ, to which the text refers, and because it is, in every believer, the root of all other graces. Wonderful indeed was the humility of the Son of God, " who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross !" Behold here, the greatest example of humility that the world ever saw, or ever will see ! and this example is proposed to our imitation. And what argument can be so forcible ? for, shall the glorious Saviour be humble, and the miserable sinner be proud ? How preposterous ! How absurd !

Pride is natural to apostate man. It was a principal ingredient in the sin of Adam, and every child

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of his is born proud. Adam got it from the devil, and we get it from Adam. And yet, it is truly said, "Pride was not made for man;" it ill becomes him. For a *sinner* to be proud, is the most monstrous thing in the world! Nothing is so hateful to God; and, if we are born of God, nothing will be so hateful to us. Now Faith lays the axe at the root of pride. Faith beholds the majesty and holiness of God, and shrinks, as it were, into nothing before him. The proud man swells by comparing himself with other sinners; but the Christian compares himself, his conduct, and then his heart, with the most pure, holy, spiritual law of God: this prevents self-righteous boasting, and shews that even his best duties are tinged with sin. He was "alive without the law once; but now the commandment is come, sin revives, and he dies." This experience will force him to the cross; he will gladly renounce his own works and righteousness, and supremely desire to be "found in Christ."

Let but the Christian think of three things, and it will promote his humility—*what he was—what he is—and what he shall be*. He was a poor, blind, naked, filthy rebel; an enemy to God, and an heir of hell. He is, by grace, a pardoned sinner, and an adopted child; but, O, what imperfection in all his graces! What defects in all his duties! What strength in his corruptions! What a disproportion between his obligations, and his returns to God; between his professions, and his practice; between his privileges, and his enjoyments! So that he can cordially unite with a better man than himself in saying, "I am the chief of sinners," and "less than the least of all saints." Let him also consider *what he shall be*—he shall be "with Christ;" he shall be "like Christ;" he shall wear a crown of glory; he shall possess a heavenly inheritance; he shall be a king, and a priest to God. Amazing prospects! Animating, yet humbling hopes! He will then, with

David, sit down and say, "Who am I, O Lord God, that thou hast brought me hitherto; and, as if this were a small thing in thy sight, thou hast spoken of thy servant's house for a great while yet to come: and, Is this the manner of men, O Lord? and what more can David say unto thee?"

2. PIETY, or "the fear of God, or "godliness," was an eminent branch of the mind that was in the man Christ Jesus. These terms are nearly of the same import, and denote the habitual, prevailing frame of the mind, in its regard to the blessed God. It is the character of the natural man that he is "ungodly" "there is no fear of God before his eyes," he lives "without God in the world," he is "alienated from the life of God," "he says to the Almighty depart from me." The very reverse of all this is the temper of the Christian, as it was also of his Master. We learn from the Gospels, and more abundantly from the Psalms, what a spirit of devotion continually animated the human nature of Christ! What reverential fear, what supreme affection, what lively zeal, what fervent prayer! A portion of the same spirit pervades the heart of every real Christian. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and "the whole of man"—his great duty, his first interest, his chief delight. And this divine principle is implanted in every believer. "I will put my fear in their heart," is the grand covenant promise, and it is fulfilled to every elect soul, when called by grace. The newborn soul turns naturally to God, as flowers to the sun, or the needle to the pole; and though it may be disturbed or diverted for a time, the heavenly principle within abides and prevails, and the christian is constrained to say "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

The spirit of piety will render those acts of religion, which were intolerably burdensome to the unconverted man, natural and pleasant. Religion is

no longer his medicine, but his food; not his task, but his delight. And the fear of God will certainly produce a reverence for his name; the Christian cannot be a profane man; he cannot habitually 'take in vain,' in the light manner of the world, the great and fearful name of the Lord his God. And this principle will insure his sacred regard to the holy Sabbath, the bible, the house of God, the preached gospel, the table of the Lord, and every means divinely appointed for his growth in grace.

3. SPIRITUALITY is another essential part of the christian temper. This is a necessary effect of regeneration, for, as "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, so, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Every nature generates its own likeness. We derive from our first parent the likeness of his apostate nature, earthly and *sensual*, not having the Spirit; but, if begotten again by the Holy Ghost, we derive from him a nature that is spiritual. Natural men "*mind* earthly things," they understand, pursue and relish only things of a worldly nature, while the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to them; but the believer, being born from above, minds heavenly things, and sets his affections supremely on things above, and not on things below. This constitutes the grand difference between the children of this world; and the children of God; and our future destination will be accordingly; for, "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." While we are in the world, a due regard must be paid to our worldly callings; for religion, so far from encouraging sloth and idleness, requires us to be "diligent in business;" but it requires us also to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The things of this world, however great and important in some views, will be considered, in the light of eternity, as empty bubbles, insignificant trifles, and childish toys. The Christian weighs every thing in the balances of eternity.

eternity. He considers what their value will be when he is on a dying bed ; and judges how far they may be made conducive to his everlasting interest, for he " walks by faith, not by sight."

Besides, he is " crucified to the world, and the world to him," by the cross of Christ. Our gracious Lord never discovered any taste or relish for the pomps and vanities of this world. As Lord of all, he could have commanded every thing that was noble and great. But it is evident that he poured contempt on worldly grandeur. His whole life, death, and doctrine, tended to stain the pride of human glory ; and to sanctify to his humble followers that lowly state he intended for them. Luxury of living, gaiety of dress, and conformity to the vain world, can plead no countenance from the example of Christ ; but self-denial, plainness of living and manners, deadness to the world, and heavenly mindedness, are the very mind that was in Christ, and will be in us if we are his genuine followers.

4. **CONTENTMENT** is another feature of the christian character. And this will result, in a happy degree, from spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. A proper view, by faith, of eternal things, and a good hope, by grace, of an interest in them, will occasion a holy indifference about worldly matters, and render us content with our present lot. Of old time, those persons " took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, who knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance." Heb. xi. 34. The way to be happy in this world is not to elevate our station to our mind, but to bring down our mind to our station. The first is, perhaps, impossible ; for the ambitious mind of the prosperous man continues to rise with his lot ; so that he is never satisfied. The last may, by divine grace, be accomplished. The christian believes that God reigns, that his providence is universal, that a sparrow does not fall without his observation, and that

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the very hairs of his head are numbered; and if so, he has reason to conclude, that a special and most gracious providence presides over all his affairs. The believer, therefore, having committed all his concerns to the Lord's care, in the diligent and prudent use of means, will rest satisfied with the disposal of heaven. He will say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." We are led to expect trouble in this world; man, being born in sin, is born to trouble; and instead of wondering that things are so bad, we have reason to wonder that they are no worse. He who knows the evil of sin, and the plague of his own heart, will say, at the worst of times. "He hath not dealt with me according to my sins, nor rewarded me according to my iniquities." Besides, there is generally some cause for praise,

"There is *Mercy* in every lot,
And *Mercy*, (encouraging thought!)
Gives even affliction a grace,
And reconciles man to his lot."

Thrice happy was the apostle Paul, who could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need"—Should you think this a difficult lesson, and that, in certain cases, you could not practise it—mark what follows:—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13. St. Paul, in himself, was as weak as another man; but he had learned to live upon Christ, and by faith to receive out of his fulness, grace for grace. Every believer may do the same. And let him remember, this patient temper is "the mind that was in Christ." Through a whole life of poverty and sufferings here, we read not of a single murmur; and when, in his agony,

agony, the bitterest cup that ever was mingled, was put into his hands, he said, "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink of it? Not my will, but thine be done."

5. MEEKNESS must also be mentioned as an amiable branch of the christian temper. Jesus Christ was remarkably meek, and he pronounced a blessing on his meek followers. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." We read of "the gentleness of Christ." How calmly did he endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; how meekly submit to the vilest indignities! Happiest they, who most resemble him! It is a great victory for a man to subdue his own angry temper; and to preserve a sacred composure amidst all the ruffling storms and tempests of cross affairs, affronts, losses and injuries. This meekness is not the effect of constitution, a temper naturally mild, nor the result of art and deceit; but a truly christian grace, wrought by the Holy Spirit, arising from self-knowledge, self-possession, a sense of the goodness and love of God; it is seated in the heart, and will discover itself in the countenance and in the language. The meek christian may be angry; but meekness will restrain his anger within proper bounds, as to the degree, duration, and effects of it; he will not be easily provoked, he will readily forgive, and will acquire that happy useful art—the government of the tongue. A loud, clamorous, boisterous, boasting professor, little resembles the meek Jesus; but the meek christian adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour, greatly recommends the Gospel of Christ, and enjoys a tranquillity of soul, which is heaven begun on earth—a blessed foretaste of the undisturbed serenity of glorified saints.

6. MERCY was a distinguishing grace in the character of Christ, and must be the prevailing disposition of his followers. Compassion to perishing sinners brought him down from heaven. Compa-

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son dictated all his words, and directed all his actions; and, blessed be God, we have still “a merciful and a faithful High Priest, who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the way.” When the sick and afflicted were brought to Jesus, he had compassion on them and healed them. When the multitude who followed him from far to hear him preach, were hungry and faint, he had compassion on them and fed them. He went about doing good. O let us be like him!

Hard as a rock, is the heart of man, by nature. Anger, envy, malice, revenge and selfishness reign, and make men resemble the devil. The greater part of men called Christians “*live to themselves,*” and are satisfied if they do *no harm*, though they do *no good*;—are secure, selfish, angry, peevish; confine their kindness to their relations; do little good but what they are pressed to; esteem all lost that is done for the relief of others; and think it wise to be cautious, and disbelieve the necessities of men: in a word, they make SELF the end of their lives: whatever their profession be, they very little represent or glorify God in the world. But on the contrary, a man whose nature is cured and rectified by grace, freed from pride, envy and selfishness, and thence rendered benevolent, and useful to his fellow-men, is the best representation we have of God upon earth, since the human nature of Christ was removed from it.

“Blessed are the merciful,” said the benevolent Redeemer, “for they shall obtain mercy.” We are not to purchase God’s mercy by our mercy; but it is a good evidence of being ourselves “vessels of mercy,” when we are inwardly disposed to be merciful. We are exhorted to “put on, *as the elect of God*, bowels of mercies.” If we have felt the need of mercy, and tasted the sweetness of mercy, we shall find a divine pleasure in being merciful to the sons
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and daughters of affliction; we shall be forward to give and forgive, to pity and relieve them.

The *souls* of men claim our first regard. Millions of men are perishing for lack of knowledge. The merciful man will not only pray for them, but will gladly endeavour to send the glorious gospel of Jesus to them: he will cast a pitying eye upon the poor ignorant children around him, and promote their religious instruction: he will gladly support the Christian ministry, knowing its important use in the conversion of sinners. Nor will the *bodies* of men be neglected. He will pity and visit the sick; he will feed the hungry; he will clothe the naked: and, in order to do this, he will rather deny himself even lawful indulgencies, than be disabled from acts of generosity. The word of God abounds with exhortations to this disposition; and if there be not a desire and endeavour thus to be useful, we may say, with St. John, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?"

The narrow limits of this discourse prevent the mention of several other branches of this holy temper, as well as a proper enlargement on those already mentioned.—We have room only to propose one more, which is the beauty and strength of them all, namely,

6. **SINCERITY.**—This is the very soul of all religion; for every Christian grace has its counterfeit. There are men who assume a profession of religion, on purpose the better to deceive others; and pretend to be devout towards God, that they more effectually cheat and defraud their neighbours.—From this vile hypocrisy, good Lord deliver us!—If there be a place in hell hotter than another, it will be the portion of the hypocrite; for how shall such "escape the damnation of hell?" Great is the importance of truth and uprightness. The Christian must needs be an honest man, exact and conscientious

ous in all his affairs, conforming himself, in all his dealings, to that golden, that divine rule, *Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even that to them.* The Christian will study "simplicity and godly sincerity," speaking the truth in love, and managing all the affairs of life as under the eye of God, and with a regard to his glory. Happy the man of whom the Lord will testify, as of Nathaniel, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!"

APPLICATION.

We may learn, from what has been said of the Christian temper, how excellent is the religion, and how holy the gospel, of Jesus Christ; how admirably calculated to promote godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity. What a happy world would this be, if men, who profess and call themselves Christians, possessed the mind that was in Christ. We may learn also the necessity of something more than *moral*ity. Men may be honest and harmless; but this is not enough. We see many who are deemed moral characters, who are ungodly, unbelievers, neglecters of Christ, despisers of the gospel. Let them not suppose that their regard to men will atone for their contempt of God. Let them know, that "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

How vain also is that profession of the truths of the gospel, which leaves a man destitute of the Christian temper, a slave to his wretched passions, and under the dominion of covetousness, pride, anger, selfishness, and worldly-mindedness. For, some there are, not only negligent of holy tempers, but who despise that preaching which enforces them, calling it legal and low. But it is evident that our Lord insisted much upon inward purity, and pronounced his first blessings upon heavenly dispositions.

tions. The apostles abound in similar exhortations, throughout their epistles; nor is he a Christian who does not hunger and thirst after the attainment of them; all believers being "predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's dear Son."

On the survey of this brief sketch of the "mind that was in Christ," who has not cause to blush, and sigh, and say, Holy Jesus, how far am I from possessing thy likeness! One of the ancients, on a like occasion, cried, "Blessed Lord, either these are not thy precepts, or we are not Christians!" But, let me ask, Is this the temper you sincerely and earnestly desire? Do you mourn over your daily defects? Do you see an excellency and a beauty in holiness, and do you ardently long to resemble your Saviour? If so, be not dejected. This desire is from the Lord, and is a token for good. Let no believer sit down in fullen despair, and say, when he contemplates the character of Jesus—It is too high and great: I can never master my corruptions, and attain his dispositions! Why not? All things are possible to God: all things are possible to him that believeth. Does not all fulness dwell in Christ? and is it not treasured up for thy use? Go to him for it—make free—it is thine for fetching. Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.—Come boldly to the throne of grace, to find grace; there is grace sufficient for thee. Open thy mouth wide, and it shall be filled. And though conscious, like the apostle Paul, that you have not already attained, neither are you already perfect; yet, like him, follow after, reach forth unto those things which are before; press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Look much at Christ; it will make you like him; you shall be "transformed into the same image, from glory to glory;" and, ere long, you "shall see him as he is," and "be satisfied when you awake, with his likeness."

A
S E R M O N

ON

TITUS ii. 11, 12.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men ; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.

THE disease of our nature, our dislike of that which is good, and our love of that which is evil, has been observed and lamented by wise men in all ages. The fact could not be denied. The difficulty was, where to find a cure. Many attempts were tried, but all in vain, till Jesus Christ the great physician appeared. The gospel alone affords a certain and universal remedy for the fatal distemper of the soul ; and this is the substance of our text.

St. Paul is here directing Titus, who was a minister of the gospel, how to discharge his duty, so as to be useful to all sorts of people, because the gospel was sent to all sorts of people. He was to teach and exhort both young and old, parents and children, masters and servants : it being the design of the gospel to bring a present salvation from sin, as well as a future deliverance from hell, and to teach all sorts of men to deny all doctrines and practices which are ungodly : and all worldly lusts of sensuality ; and that we should live soberly with respect to ourselves ; righteously and honestly with respect to our neighbour ; and, in a holy manner with respect to God. This will appear more plainly by considering the several parts of the text distinctly, and in the following order.

1. The gospel of Christ is the grace or gift of God.
2. It bringeth salvation.
3. It hath appeared to all men.
4. It teacheth us to live a holy life.

1. The gospel is the grace of God. The word *Grace* signifies, in general, the free favour of God, either in his *good will* towards us, or in his *good gifts* to us. Here it means one of his good gifts to us, namely, the Gospel; and the gospel may well be called his grace, for, it is the Gift of his grace; it is the Revelation of his grace; and, it is the Instrument of his grace.

The gospel is called the grace of God, because it is the *Gift* of his grace; it is a matter of pure favour that we have the gospel; it ought to be thought a very great blessing indeed, and to be esteemed above all earthly blessings. It is a mercy to have health, it is a mercy to have bread, but it is a much greater mercy to have the gospel. Blessed is the people who know the joyful sound.

The gospel is also called the grace of God, because it is the *Revelation* of his grace and good-will to poor sinners. We could never have known whether God would be gracious to sinners or not, without the gospel. We could never have known that salvation is by grace. All mankind naturally seek it by their own works, and not by grace. But the very design of the gospel is to declare the grace of God; to let us know the love of God to man, which he has proved in the gift of his Son, and in his readiness to pardon sin for the sake of his Son. Sinners had more reason to expect a revelation of his wrath, than of his mercy, for all have sinned, and "the wages of sin is death." As soon as our first parents had sinned, and heard the voice of the Lord God in the garden, they were afraid, and ran to hide themselves, for they expected to hear nothing but the sentence of death. But they were mistaken, for
God

God was pleased to give them a promise of his Son. In all ages he gave some hints of his intended mercy, but never so plainly, as by the gospel, or good news of salvation by grace. We must take care to distinguish the gospel from the law. The law of the ten commandments requires perfect love and perfect obedience, and it curses to hell every man who breaks it but once. Ignorant people expect little from the bible but to teach them their duty, and how to be good, and so to get to heaven by their obedience; to be sure the bible does teach us our duty, and it would be well if people learned and did it better; but the first design of the bible is to reveal Christ as a Saviour; the design of the law is not only to teach us our duty, but to convince us we have not done it; to shew us our sin and our danger, and to oblige us to fly to Christ, that we may be saved by grace.

Again—the gospel is called the grace of God, because it is the *Instrument* of his grace; it is what he sends by his ministers, and blesses by his Spirit, “to open mens eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Nothing but the truth of God will do this. All the finest preaching in the world about virtue and morality, will do no good as to the conversion or salvation of a sinner. It often makes men proud of themselves, keeps them ignorant of Christ, and makes them “go about to establish their own righteousness;” which is “to frustrate the grace of God,” and is as much as to say that “Christ died in vain.” But the gospel is the sword of the Spirit, the rod of his strength, and the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth. You see, therefore, with what good reason the gospel is called the grace of God. We are now to shew that,

II. The gospel bringeth Salvation.

The grand subject of this gospel is Salvation. It supposes the guilt and danger of man as a sinner. It

declares what Christ has done and suffered for our deliverance. It declares God's readiness to forgive all manner of sin and blasphemy, if we come to him by Jesus Christ. In short, it is to restore man from all the effects of his fall. Is he far gone from God? it is to bring him back. Is he fallen? it is to raise him up. Is he condemned on account of sin? it is to justify him from all things. Is he an enemy of God? it is to make him a friend. Is he a slave of Satan? it is to make a free man. Thus it bringeth salvation.

It brings it to the *Ear*. The trumpet of the gospel sounds with an inviting voice, it is a joyful sound. No music was ever so sweet, as the sound of mercy to a convinced sinner. And faith cometh by hearing. It is the will of God that this sound should go out into all the earth, and that the gospel should be preached to every creature. 'He that hath ears to hear let him hear.'

It brings it to the *Mind* or understanding. All God's children are taught of God, and every one that is taught of God cometh to Christ. Many people plead their ignorance, and think they shall be excused on account of it; but the gospel is sent on purpose to enlighten the ignorant; and it will be our own fault, and our ruin, if we remain in the dark; it can only be because we love darkness rather than light. The gospel is a glorious light, and when it is attended with the power of the Spirit, it chafes away all the natural darkness of our minds, and makes us clearly see the wonderful plan of salvation by grace.

It brings it to the *Heart*. It comes with power and life. It is not entertained with a cold and formal assent, as a matter of small concern, but cordially welcomed as the messenger of life. It is said of Lydia, in the Acts of the Apostles, that "the Lord opened her heart, so that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul." He does the same
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for all real christians. They receive the word with joy. They approve of it heartily. It brings peace to their troubled consciences, and it brings love to God and man into their hearts.

It brings it to the *Life*. It is designed to regulate the conduct, and to make the believer holy in all manner of conversation and godliness. But this will appear more plainly hereafter.

III. The gospel of salvation hath appeared to *all men*.

To *all nations* of men; it was not confined to the Jews, as they thought it would be. Jesus Christ ordered it to be preached to all nations, to all the world, to every creature. Accordingly on the day of Pentecost the apostles preached it in a great variety of languages to people of various countries, and afterwards they, and many other preachers, went into all the countries then known.

To *all sorts* of men. This is the chief design of the words. In human society there must be various ranks and orders of men, and they must be distinguished by different names; but the gospel knows no distinctions; it is equally sent to high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, male and female, for "Christ is all in all." Col. iii. 11. Let none, therefore, think they may be excused from regarding it. Many of the rich think the gospel is well enough for the poor, but they are too wise to need it. Many of the poor, on their part, think religion rather belongs to the rich; but they are so ignorant, and have so much to mind for the body, that they think they may be excused. But you see, this salvation is sent to all men; and "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" But again, this gospel is sent

To *sinners of every degree*; great sinners, or little sinners, if it be proper to call any so. Jesus Christ came to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance;

pentance ; and none but those who feel themselves to be sinners will regard his call. Such persons heard him gladly on earth, while the proud pharisees, who thought themselves good, despised him, and abused him, as the friend of publicans and sinners. Blessed be God that sinners, however great, are not excluded from the hope of the gospel. Christ commanded it to be first preached at Jerusalem, among his murderers : where, probably, many of them were converted ; and to this very day, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from *all* sin."

Let it also be observed that our text says, the gospel *bringeth* salvation ; not, it *shall* bring it hereafter, but it *bringeth* it *now*. It brings it near at this moment ; "the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thine heart." Many people dreadfully mistake the matter, who look only for a salvation hereafter ; they do not think of being saved till they die ; but salvation is a present business ; and if we are not saved before we die, we shall never be saved at all. We must now be enlightened, convinced, believe in Christ, pass from death unto life, and thus be made new creatures, or, we can never enter into the kingdom of heaven. O that this gospel may *now* bring into our hearts a present salvation ! We proceed to the last and principal thing in our text.

IV. The gospel which bringeth salvation, teacheth us to live a holy life—it *teacheth us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world* ; that is, it teacheth us what a holy life is,—The necessity of living such a life—and, How we may attain it.

I. The gospel, which bringeth salvation, teacheth us what a holy life is—the true nature, and full extent of it. We have no other sufficient rule. The world affords nothing but imperfect examples, and our own deceitful hearts would often curtail the perfect

perfect rule. This is our teacher. Let us ever hear and read it with this view. Let it be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths.

This holy guide directs us, in the first place, *to deny ungodliness*,—to renounce, abhor, and forsake all infidelity, idolatry, and impiety of every kind; every thing contrary to the four first commandments. If the devil, or wicked men, or our own wicked hearts, would tempt us to neglect the worship of God, or to take his name in vain, or to break the Sabbath, we must deny and refuse to do it. We must also *deny worldly lusts*, all irregular inclinations and desires, forbidden by the last six commandments. These are *worldly lusts*; such as the men of the world gratify, and place their happiness in. These will often ask for indulgence. They will plead very strongly that they are natural, that there is no harm in them, and that all the world indulges them, but they are “worldly lusts,” and must be denied, unless we are willing to be damned with the world; for “the end of these things is death.” These are the things that chain men to the world and to a life of sense, make us like the brutes, cause us to forget God, to neglect the salvation of our souls; and “for these things sake, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” This ungodliness, and these worldly lusts must, therefore, be denied; and this is that *Self-denial* which our Lord insists upon, and without which we cannot be his disciples.

But this is not all. We are taught by the gospel how to live. We are to live—*soberly—righteously*, and *godly*; these three words tell us our duty as to *ourselves*, *our neighbour*, and *our God*.

To live *soberly* is not only to abstain from drunkenness, which is a damnable sin, but from all excess in eating, drinking, and other bodily indulgencies. It is to be sober and moderate in our passions, our recreations, our speech, our dress, and whole behaviour; it is to be temperate and moderate in all lawful

ful things, using the world as not abusing it ; using it as pilgrims and strangers ; not making it our rest or portion : but making all worldly comforts secondary things, subservient to the interests of our souls and the glory of our God. This is to live soberly.

We are also to live *righteously*, that is, in respect of our neighbour ; to give every one his due ; to honour all men ; and do the duty of our stations, whether to our superiors, inferiors, or equals. The New Testament is full of excellent directions as to *relative duties*. The apostles largely teach us the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters, servants and subjects. A true christian will study his bible with this view ; and, in every relation of life, he will endeavour to conform himself to it ; and he that pretends to religion without this, is a mere hypocrite. This is too little regarded by many professors of religion, as beneath their notice ; they would even deter ministers from enforcing the relative duties, by calling it “ legal stuff, working for life, and arminianism ;” but these people know not what they say, and how much they disgrace the gospel of Christ, which our text declares, is intended to teach us these things. It was a weighty saying of Mr. Whitfield, that “ To be *really* holy, is to be *relatively* holy.” All sincere believers think so, and act accordingly.

But the gospel also requires us to live *godly*. Many ignorant people think that if they live *soberly* and *righteously* it is enough. How many do we hear excusing themselves from all regard to gospel-religion, by pleading that they are sober and honest. And will these people call themselves *Christians* ? Moral heathens they may be. We deny they are Christians ; for the Christian has a constant regard to God in Christ ; he knows him, he believes in him, he fears him, he loves him, he prays to him, he converses with him, he lives to him. O the miserable blindness of many in this land of light ! How many on a dying bed, build all their hopes on their honesty

honesty, and having done no harm ; while they have lived all their days in neglect of the salvation of Christ, neglect of his sabbath and worship, buried alive in the cares of the world ; sensual, worldly, covetous ; perhaps opposers of the gospel, and persecutors of the faithful. The Lord in his infinite mercy open the eyes of such mistaken persons, and preserve them from going out of the world with a lie in their right hand !

To live *godly* includes a great deal. We must know God, by the teaching of his Spirit. We must believe on him as a God reconciled in Christ. We must love him as our heavenly Father. We shall then love his law, and gladly be governed by his commandments. His word will be precious to us. His sabbath delightful. His worship pleasant. His ordinances sweet. In a word, we shall "walk humbly with our God ;" it will be our meat and drink to do his will ; and being no longer our own, but bought with a price, we shall glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are his.

This is that kind of life which the gospel teaches us. This is its nature and extent. The gospel also shews us the absolute *necessity* of it. Many deceive themselves with vain words, and think there is no occasion to be so strict ; and they labour to render a life of holiness contemptible, by calling it ill names, such as fanaticism and enthusiasm, and by ridiculing serious persons as methodists, hypocrites, and righteous over-much. But we abide by the bible. We abide by our text. The God of truth has prescribed this as the way of life ; and has awfully declared that, without repentance, without faith, without holiness and godliness, no man shall see the Lord. By this we are determined to abide, and let others look to themselves.

But should any say, All this is very right and good, but who can come up to it ? By what means can we attain it ? I answer, the gospel that bringeth salvation teacheth us how to attain it, and this
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the peculiar excellency of the gospel. The teachers of mere morality are like the task-masters of Pharaoh, who required the Israelites to make brick without straw. They are always preaching that men should do this and that, but they tell them not their own inability, nor where their great strength lies. When we view a natural man wedded to the world, or tied and bound with the chains of his sin, or wallowing in the mire of sensual lusts, we are ready to say, Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the Leopard his spots? But nothing is too hard for the Lord. The gospel first directs the sinner to repair by faith to Christ, and to obtain the pardon of his sins through his precious blood. This is his first business: And if the sinner be enabled to believe in Jesus, his faith will work by love, will purify his heart, and overcome his lusts. We are not, by our own power, first to reform our lives, and then, as gracious and good people, to trust in Christ for salvation; but as soon as ever we discover our need of a Saviour, to fly to him without delay, just as we are. And he casts out none that come to him. Believing in him will give a new turn to our affections. We shall mourn for pardoned sin. We shall hate the murderers of our Lord. We shall be crucified to the world by the cross of Jesus; and the ways of godliness will no longer be a burden and a task but our pleasant and easy service. The love of Christ will constrain us, and we shall judge that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all that henceforth they who live, should not live to themselves, but unto him who died for them.

Besides. Whoever believes in Jesus is really united to him, in the same manner as the vine and its branches are united. All our fruitfulness in good works depends on this union. "Abide in me," said our Lord; "thus shall ye bring forth much fruit, for without me, ye can do nothing." This is the true secret of godliness, the gospel mystery of sanctification, and the only way of becoming holy. In
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this way nothing is too hard to be accomplished ; and on this ground every believer may say with St. Paul, " I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me." We shall now conclude with some *Inferences* and *Exhortations*.

1. Is the gospel the Grace of God ? The Gift of his grace ? The Revelation of his grace ? And the Instrument of his grace ? Then take care to distinguish the gospel from all false doctrine. Beware of " another gospel." Whatever does not bring to helpless sinners the good news of a free grace salvation is not the gospel. Reject it.

And O take care that " you receive not the grace of God in vain." 2 Cor. vi. 1. The grace of God, as a divine principle in the heart, cannot be received in vain, but the gospel, which is also called the grace of God, is often received in vain. It is a great privilege to have the gospel preached to us, but a dreadful thing to have it prove " the favour of death to death ;" for, Christ has said it, " He that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16.

Is the gospel the grace of God ? Prize it yourselves, and recommend it to others. Next to Christ himself, it is the greatest gift of God to a ruined world. What an inexpressible privilege and honor is it, to be in any way instrumental in communicating this heavenly gift to others ! Let us invite our neighbours to hear it. Let us put some gospel tracts into their hands. Let us speak of it to our relations and friends. Let us support and countenance the preaching of it at home and abroad ; and, especially, Let us recommend it to others by the holy effects it has produced on ourselves. Let us recommend it by our lives.

It appears from what has been said that there is no ground for the reproach often cast on the gospel of grace, that it leads to licentiousness, or that the doctrine of faith and grace is hurtful to morality and good works. It is a foul and groundless slander. Nothing is more false. Our text confutes it at once

once. We have shown that the gospel is properly called the grace of God ; it is the gospel that bringeth salvation by grace ; and this free-grace gospel teacheth us to live a holy life. What can be plainer ? And let it be noted, that nothing but the gospel of grace can truly teach or produce a holy life. This was, at first, the power of God to the salvation of bigotted Jews, and beastly Heathens. In every succeeding age it has had the same blessed effects. And it is the same to this day. While moral preachers labour in vain, and many of them address their heathen lectures to sleepy hearers and empty pews, we know and are sure, that the plain truths of the gospel are effectual to quicken dead sinners, to convert notorious rebels, and to produce in numberless persons "the fruits of good living." This is its proper tendency ; these, its genuine fruits. And we adore the grace that renders the word powerful for these blessed purposes.

If any false professors of religion abuse the doctrines of grace for licentious practices, they have no countenance in so doing from the gospel, or the preachers of it. Our text will at once confront and confound such base hypocrites. It teaches them the nature, necessity, and method of attaining a holy life. Believers were "chosen in Christ, that they might be holy, and without blame before him in love." All the commands of God both in the Old and New Testament, require it. It was an eminent branch of the design of Christ in dying for his people. It is necessary to the present peace and happiness of our souls, in this world of sin and vanity. This is the way in which God expects us to glorify him among men. And in this consists our "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light."

May our holy God, who has favoured us with his holy gospel, render it effectual by his Holy Spirit, to make us "holy in all conversation and godliness ;" and, at the great day, "present us holy, and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight." To Him, be glory, now and for ever. Amen.

A
S E R M O N
O N
ROMANS xii. 2.



*And be not conformed to this world.**

THIS is a general exhortation, adapted to a great variety of occasions. It affords an excellent rule for the Christian's conduct, which he may readily apply, when tempted to follow the course of this world. It is easy to know what the world loves and pursues, and it is easy to remember that the Christian must take a different course. The way of the world is the broad way to destruction; the way of life is narrow, and trodden but by few.

The text is a plain and direct prohibition against conformity to the world. It is addressed to the people of God, and stands connected with an affectionate exhortation to be devoted to him. This chapter is wholly practical; and follows a large and excellent discourse upon the exceeding riches of divine grace to sinners, in their free and full justification through faith in Christ Jesus, and the most noble and glorious privileges to which they are called. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Thus are the doctrines of grace sweetly connected with a gracious walk

* As this sermon is designed to expose the sin and danger of *Carnal Games and Amusements*, especially in the professors of religion, it may be usefully read in *Holiday seasons*; at the time of a *Fair*, or *Wakes*; or when *Theatrical Amusements* are introduced into a town. It may also be lent to a friend who is in danger of being tempted to sinful compliances upon such occasions.

2 NON-CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

and conversation. They are connected in the Bible, and they are connected in all those who are taught of God. May we happily know their sacred union by our own experience!

In order to this complete devotedness to God, the apostle here advises believers "not to be *conformed* to this world"—not to be moulded into the same fashion—not to comply with their temper and spirit—not to imitate their depraved customs and manners; but, on the contrary, to "be transformed, by the renewing of their minds;" to be changed into a contrary, better more glorious, and abiding form—in the daily renovation of their souls, yet more and more, by the Holy Spirit. The text, therefore, teaches us this great and useful doctrine, that

CHRISTIANS must not be conformed to this world.

By "the world," we are certainly to understand, the men of the world, in opposition to true believers, or the people of God. That there is a real and essential distinction between the world and the church, is abundantly plain from the Scriptures. Jesus Christ saith of his disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" and St. John saith of believers, "We know we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." This important distinction prevails throughout the Bible.—Every where, God's people are represented as differing from the world. Believers are called children of God; others, the children of the devil, and the children of wrath: the one are friends, the other enemies: the one far from God, the other are brought nigh to God.

It was the design of Christ, in dying for his people, "to deliver them from this present evil world"—to save them "from the evil that is in the world"—to make an evident separation, and "to purify unto himself a *peculiar people*, zealous of good works;" that is,

to separate them from the wicked world for his own use, and for his own glory, as his precious and peculiar property, that they might be zealously affected towards him and his cause, in the performance of every good work.

The gospel of Jesus Christ calls believers to this separation, and is the instrument of effecting it. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." 2 Cor. vi. 17. There is much danger in the company of idolaters, and in connexion with unbelievers; there is danger of being infected and defiled; therefore a proper distance must be kept. And the gospel of Christ becomes an occasion of this separation; it creates division, it causes disunion; the believer is crucified to the world, and the world unto him. Thus faith, which is the bond of union with Christ, is the instrument of separation from the world. And how reasonable is it to expect, that persons, whose state and character now differ essentially from others, and who will be eternally separated as far as heaven is from hell, should now bear the visible marks of distinction, and not be conformed to this world!

We may now proceed to enquire in what this non-conformity consists, or in what degree it is required; for a total separation is impossible, in the present state of things. There are family connections, which are not to be dissolved, because some of the parties are gracious, and others remain in their sins, 1 Cor. vii. 10. There are also civil connections, in the lawful affairs of this world, with which religion cannot interfere. If we would wholly avoid intercourse with the wicked, "we must needs go out of the world," for the world is full of them, 1 Cor. v. 10. Neither does religion require or countenance a morose and sullen, or uncivil behaviour to the men of the world; much less does it demand an entire exclusion from the affairs of life, and a solitary confinement in a monastery or nunnery. Christians are not, like the old

Pharisees, to say to others—"Stand off—we are holier than you." On the contrary, believers are "the salt of the earth," and, by their necessary and lawful connexions with the world, are the happy means of preserving it from utter corruption; they are "the lights of the world," and diffuse some general rays of knowledge amidst the general darkness. And by their wise, holy, and prudent conduct among men, are to condemn the world, as to what is evil in it, and recommend the gospel they profess to the notice and approbation of others. But, while they are thus engaged, they are not to be conformed to the world, in the following respects.

1. *As to the Errors of the world*—their false and dangerous sentiments in religion. The doctrines of the gospel are directly contrary to the generally received opinions of worldly men: they directly tend to humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to promote holiness; while the notions of the world tend to make the sinner proud, with some fancied opinion of his goodness, works, and righteousness; to diminish the glory of Jesus Christ as "the Lord our Righteousness;" and to make holiness in heart and life a needless, if not a contemptible thing. It is the high privilege of God's people to be "taught of God;" to have the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive;" to "know the truth," to "be of the truth," to "keep the truth," and to be "sanctified by the truth." False teachers "are of the world, therefore they speak of the world, and the world heareth them;" but he that is of God, and knoweth God, heartily embraces the truth of the gospel, he "heareth the voice of Christ, the true Shepherd, but the voice of a stranger he will not follow," 1 John iv. 5, 6. John x. 16, 26, 27. This separation from the religious errors of the world is of the greatest importance; and while we pay all civil respects to all men, and abhor persecution, we must give no countenance to error. St. John gives

us this direction—"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (the doctrine of Christ), receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 10, 11.

2. *We must not be conformed to the world in its Sinful Practices.* "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," are called "the world's trinity," their god whom they worship and obey. The works of the flesh, and the fruits of the Spirit, are directly contrary to each other; they who are in the flesh practise the one, they that are in the Spirit practise the other. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; the doers of which shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 19—21. But "if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; and they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." The Christian must therefore dissent from the world in its evil practices; even "the appearance of evil" must be carefully shunned. Pure religion and undefiled is to keep himself unspotted from the world—to behave in such a circumspect and holy manner, as to keep clear of the pollutions of this evil and ensnaring world, that he may not bring a slur upon his conscience or his character.

3. *Christians must not be conformed to the Spirit of the world.* There is a certain disposition and taste which forms the true character of a man of the world, and which operates as a powerful principle in the regulation of his whole conduct. There is also an opposite principle given to the people of God in their new birth, which gives a new taste to their minds, and a new bias to their affections. St. Paul, speaking of both these, saith, "Now we have received, not the

spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God." 1 Cor. ii. 12. The spirit of the world must of course be a worldly spirit; or, in the language of scripture, a "carnal mind;" it can be no other; for "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh." So God himself declared of man, before the flood—"My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is *flesh*—wholly fleshly and carnal"—"sensual, not having the Spirit." The desires, the pursuits, the delights of natural men are only worldly. Their cry is, "Who will show us any good?"—"What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" The world, in some form or other, is their beloved object. But the people of God, "redeemed from their vain conversation," have a nobler object in view.—They are *spiritual* in their taste and pursuits: they can no longer grovel in the dust, or feed on husks: they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and seek the things that are above. How poor, and mean, and low, are the sordid objects of the world in their esteem! Even the wisest and greatest among natural men are amusing themselves with the toys of children, the baubles of idiots, or the pranks of madmen, compared with the manly, solid, heavenly aims and employments of true believers.

4. *The Christian must not be conformed to the Company of the world.* The men of the world are not his chosen companions. We have already observed, that converse with them cannot be wholly avoided. The lawful businesses of life will necessarily bring them together. But we speak of making them intimate friends, and the companions of leisure hours. But "how can two walk together, except they be agreed?" What fellowship hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial, or Christians with the sons of Belial? Either must the Christian conform himself to the light, vain, frothy, and often profane conversation of worldly men, or they must conform themselves to his spiritual views; and which of these is most likely
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to happen it is not hard to tell. We become insensibly like our intimate friends, and naturally drink into their spirit: as therefore there is, in general, but little probability of doing good to carnal men by our company, it is far wisest and safest for us to keep our distance. Intimate and habitual friendship with wicked men is considered, in the Scripture, as opposition to God. St. James, addressing himself to conforming professors, saith, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God."—If our chief happiness be in the things of the world, and if we court the friendship of wicked men in order to procure them, we are, at heart, enemies to God; and in persons of a religious character, who profess to be bethrothed unto Christ as their spiritual husband, this is heart-adultery.

And if this occasional conformity to worldly persons be so blameable, what must we think of forming connections with them for life? How criminal, and how dangerous, to act directly contrary to the grand rule in this case—to marry—"only in the Lord!" 1 Cor. vii. 39.

5. *Christians must not conform themselves to the world in their Carnal Amusements.* The taste of men discovers itself in nothing more plainly than in their choice of amusements. It is easy to know what these are, and what is adapted to the corrupt taste of the carnal mind. Worldly men are never so much in their element as when engaged in them; and, to enjoy them, they will often sacrifice their most important interests. Among these the amusements of the theatre have the first place; for these the world strongly pleads, and affects to place them on a level with divine ordinances, by saying, They can learn as much from a good play as from a sermon. But it should be remembered that sermons, and means of grace, derive all their virtue from the authority of Christ who appointed them, and has promised to bless them;

NON-CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.

them; but the advocates of plays can never pretend that Christ has either ordained them, or engaged to put his blessing upon them.

So far are plays from being useful to the cause of virtue, that they are one of the most successful engines of vice that Satan ever invented. Several of the heathen philosophers and law-givers opposed them in the strongest terms. Plato banishes them from his commonwealth. Xenophon commends the Persians for not suffering their youth to hear any thing amorous, thinking it dangerous to add any weight to the bias of nature. Seneca complains, that by the stage vice made an insensible approach, and stole on the people in the disguise of pleasure. Tacitus says, the German ladies preserved their honour, by having no play-houses among them. The Athenians would not suffer a Judge to compose a comedy. The Lacedemonians would not endure the stage, under any kind of regulation. The Romans, in their better times, reckoned the stage so disgraceful, that any Roman turning actor was degraded. And we may add, that the English laws, till very lately, denominated stage-players—rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars.

The earliest Christians abhorred them. Tertullian, in the second century, says, “We (Christians) have nothing to do with the phrennies of the race-ground, the lewdness of the play-house, or the barbarities of the bear-garden. Some of the ancient councils ordained that players should be excommunicated, and that even the sons of clergymen must not be present at plays; “it being always unlawful for Christians to come among blasphemers.” A good writer says—“Will you not avoid this seat of infection? The very air suffers by their impurities, and they breathe the plague. What though the performance be entertaining; what though innocence and virtue shine in some parts of it; it is not the custom to prepare poison unpalatably. No; to make the mischief spread, they must oblige the sense, and make the dose pleasant. Thus the devil throws in a cordial drop to make the draught

draught go down, and steals some ingredients from the dispensatory of heaven. Look upon all their fine sentences, their flights of fortitude, and their loftiness of style—as honey dropping from the bowels of a toad or the bag of a spider.” “And, admitting,” says another, “that some good may be learnt at the play-house—do people use to send their daughters to a bawdy-house to learn discipline? Do gentlemen educate their sons under highway-men to teach them courage? Or will any man venture on board a leaky vessel, that he may learn the art of shifting in a storm?” Besides, if plays have such a moral tendency, how is it that the players are generally the most immoral people in the world, and the neighbourhood of play-houses the very sink of filthiness?

Archbishop Tillotson thought plays “a mighty reproach to Britain, and not fit to be tolerated in a civilized, much less in a Christian nation.” He calls the play-house “the devil’s chapel, the school and nursery of vice and lewdness.” And one of the Judges well said—“One play-house ruins more souls than fifty churches can save.”

Dancing.—The dancing of both sexes, and especially in public places, is another species of amusement highly pleasing to the world, but extremely dangerous to good morals. The gaiety it inspires, the company into which it leads, and various evils connected with it, render it every way unbecoming the Christian; who has the utmost need to cultivate seriousness and gravity, and to live and act as a pilgrim and a stranger. There is scarcely any thing, not absolutely and notoriously wicked, in which conformity to the world consists more than the amusement of the ball-room. Not a few have been called out of it into eternity; but where is the person who would wish, when summoned to the bar of God, to be found so employed?

Playing at Cards is another favourite diversion with the world. The express purpose of this amusement is a sufficient argument against it—it is to kill time. Alas! our time is short enough, and will die of itself;

we need not hasten its exit. Our days are as an hand-breadth, and our age is as nothing. We complain of the shortness of life, and yet labour to reduce its narrow span. It may justly be doubted whether any game be lawful which depends upon casting a lot; for dealing the cards is of that nature, and is therefore a kind of appeal to God for the success of our play, for "the lot is cast into the lap, but the disposal thereof is of the Lord." But, not to insist upon this, it is really a childish business. Is it a poor employment for rational and immortal beings to spend many hours of precious time in throwing about bits of spotted paper. The conversation that accompanies it is generally frivolous and foolish. The passions of avarice and anger frequently excited, and the tragical consequences of gaming, are so perfectly opposite to the Christian character, that a good man ought to reject the amusement altogether.

There are other diversions, as horse-races, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, &c. as well as conformity to the world in gay, indecent, or too expensive fashions of dress, upon which we have not room to comment particularly. There is one grand rule applicable to them all, and which may afford a pretty good test of their propriety or impropriety. You will find this apostolic direction in Col. iii. 17. "*Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed—do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father, by him.*" Now, can you tell me how to see a play, to dance a minuet, or to play a game at cards—"in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to the glory of God?" Can you pray for the Lord's presence and blessing on these engagements? A good man once convinced a company of the folly of these things, by offering to say grace before cards, or to pray for a blessing on them. The company felt the impropriety, and asked him what he was going to do? The good man replied—"God forbid I should do any thing on which I cannot ask his blessing." Common sense forbids you to say—"Lord go with me to the play-house, and bless the good

good instruction I go to receive!" or, "Lord give me a good hand at cards!" Such petitions would be justly reckoned impious; but the impropriety clearly shews, that what cannot be done with prayer, cannot be done with a good conscience, cannot be done to the glory of God, and therefore ought not to be done at all. In all these things the consistent Christian must remember the text—"Be not conformed to this world."

APPLICATION.

From what has been said it is surely evident, that it is the duty of Christians not to be conformed to this world. It is plain that God's people are a distinct people, and ought to be a separate people. There is a holy singularity, though not an affected singularity, which well becomes them. This indeed requires courage. In certain situations, where persons have been closely connected with the carnal and the gay, and especially with the great, it will not be very easy to come out from among them, and avow that they belong to Christ. Yet, let none despair. The scripture shews us how it may be done, 1 John v. 4.—"Whosoever is *born of God*, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH." By the new nature which the Christian receives, he gets above the terrors and allurements of the men and things of this world, so as not to be driven away by the one, or drawn aside by the other, from his duty to God. And this noble conquest is obtained, not by our own power, but by the strength we derive from Christ, through faith in him. Faith realises eternal things, and shews us how vain and mean are the pursuits of the world. Faith also realises the presence of God, and judges his approbation to be infinitely superior to the friendship of men.

Thus Moses, the man of God, triumphed over the world.—"When come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy

enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season : esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Heb. xi. 24. It was *by faith* that Moses did this. Faith shewed him the vanity and danger of a court-life, of riches, and grandeur, and sensual pleasure. Faith also shewed him "the recompense of reward"—the glories of the eternal world, which he should continue to enjoy, when all human pomp is buried in the dust. He therefore wisely chose the better part, though attended with poverty and shame. With the crown of glory in view, he was willing to take up the cross, and even to glory in it. He determined to unite himself with God's people, and suffer reproach and affliction with them, rather than be conformed to this sinful and perishing world.

This subject shews the necessity of the new birth. If we would not be *conformed* to this world, it is necessary for us to be *transformed*, by the *renewing* of our mind, as the apostle adds, immediately after our text. *Be ye transformed*—changed into a better form—from being "earthly, sensual, and devilish," to become heavenly, spiritual, angelical; and this is done "by the renewing of our minds." The Holy Spirit begins this renewing work in regeneration, it is gradually carried on in sanctification; in dying, more and more, to sin and the world, until the blessed work be perfected in everlasting glory. Thus shall we "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The will of God, as revealed in his word, for our direction in this particular, and in every other branch of duty is *good*; good in itself, and good for us; conformity to it is *acceptable* and well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; and it is *perfect*—it is sufficient to make a finished Christian, "thoroughly furnished to every good work." O that divine grace may so transform our hearts, that we may prove, and prove by our own *experience*, (for nothing else can teach it) how happy a thing it is to be wholly devoted to God, and to be governed in every respect by his sacred will.

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Preparation for Death.

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S E R M O N,



ON

MATTHEW xxiv. 44.

*Therefore, be ye also ready.**

DEATH is a most serious thing! It is impossible to express, in words, what a most serious thing DEATH is! Those who have thought and said the most about it, in the time of their health, have found dying to be a far more serious matter than they could before conceive. "The living know that they must die;" and yet, how few lay it to heart! How few there are who "so number their days as to apply their hearts to wisdom!" In small country villages, where death seldom comes, the people scarcely think of it; and "their inward thought seems to be, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations:" and in large cities, where the bell tolls every day, and people constantly see coffins and funerals, the commonness of death takes away the solemnity of it. And in some places, it is shocking to reflect how little seriousness attends a funeral, and that by excessive eating, drinking, and unseasonable mirth, the house of mourning is turned into the house of feasting. All this shows that the heart of man is filled with criminal vanity, and how far it is from that constant seriousness which becomes mortals, living on the borders of eternity. Yet,

* This sermon may be peculiarly seasonable, when the providence of God hath removed a relation, a friend, or a neighbour.

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when death comes into our houses or our neighbourhood, we should be particularly thoughtful. When it pleases God to remove a relation, a friend, or a neighbour, we should consider him as speaking to us—speaking the solemn language of the text, “Be ye also ready.” It is as if he said—“Thoughtless mortals, remember your latter end. Consider this providence. Your fellow creature is dead:—he speaks no more—he moves no more—he breathes no more: he has done with all the businesses, all the pleasures, all the relations of life: he is stripped of his former raiment, and wrapped in a shroud: he walks no more at large, but is confined to the narrow limits of the coffin: he mixes in human society no more; he is now the companion of worms; he has forsaken all his former possessions, and retains nothing but a little spot of earth, with which he will shortly mingle, so as not to be distinguished from it. This is the end of man. This will shortly be your end. Prepare for it; prepare to die; prepare to meet your God. Such is the language of Providence. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear it.

The words of our text were spoken by Jesus Christ to his disciples, with respect to the destruction of Jerusalem, and also with respect to the end of the world. The destruction of Jerusalem was a “coming of the Son of Man,” to execute terrible judgments on the unbelieving Jews. The Son of Man will also come to judge the world at the last day. But the particular time of the first event was kept secret; “the day and the hour was known to no man.” The same may be said of the day of judgment. Our Saviour uses this as an argument with his disciples to be *always ready*. “Watch, therefore,” saith he, “for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” And this he enforces by two comparisons, taken from the common prudence of men. If any house-keeper was told, that some
time

time or another in the night his house would be attacked by thieves, he would be sure to watch, at every hour, till the danger was over. And if a servant is ordered to sit up for his master, but knows not whether he will come home at twelve o'clock, at two, or at three, he ought to be watching, that whenever he comes he may be ready to open the door:—so, *Be ye also ready, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.*

The hour of death, is the hour of the Lord's coming to us. He comes to put a period to that life which his power had constantly supported. He comes to separate the immortal spirit from the mortal body. He comes to call the soul to his tribunal, and fix its state in endless bliss or woe. And although his coming will not be visible, attended with angels in the clouds of heaven, as his last grand coming shall be, yet it is equally important and solemn in its consequences to each individual. Jesus has "the keys of death;" he has a right to close our lives when he pleases; and he has "the keys of the unseen world," to open the doors of heaven to his people, and to open the doors of hell to the wicked.

But the time of his coming is a profound secret; "of that day and of that hour knoweth no man." There is, indeed, "an appointed time to man upon the earth;" "his days are determined;" "the number of his months are with God," who has fixed "bounds which he cannot pass." But, *where* the bounds are fixed, or how many the years, and months, and days—Who can tell? It is not fit for us to know. If wicked men certainly knew they should yet live many years, their hearts would be fully set in them to do evil; they would be more presumptuously wicked than they are. And if weakly and timorous people knew the time of their death, they would thereby be made unfit for any of the enjoyments or duties of life. It is therefore best as it is. Thus we are kept dependent on the God

of our lives; and, if truly wise, we are kept always watchful; always desiring and endeavouring, according to our Saviour's advice in the text—*to be ready*, which is the subject of the present discourse. We therefore observe, that

To be always ready for death, should be the first, the grand business of our lives.

No man, remaining in his natural state of sin, is, or can be, ready for death. "The wages of sin is death;" and he who dies "in his sins" must receive the wages of them. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness;" "chased out of the world," forced away in anger, and against his will, like a malefactor to the dungeon, or a criminal to the gibbet. The natural man cleaves to the dust; his head and heart are full of worldly schemes and projects of happiness; but death unexpectedly arrives, and stops him short. "In that very day his thoughts perish;" and "while he saith, peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh upon him, as travail upon a woman with child, and he cannot escape." He is perhaps saying to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry:" but God saith unto him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee."

It is unspeakably awful for a person to die in his sins; his guilt unpardoned; his heart unrenewed; under the power of that carnal mind which is enmity against God. "Guilt," says one, "is a bad companion in life, but how terrible will it be in death! It lies now, perhaps, like cold brimstone on their benumbed consciences; but when death opens the way for the sparks of divine vengeance to fall upon it, it will make dreadful flames in the conscience, in which the soul will be wrapt up for ever."

Vain are the hopes of ungodly men with respect

to death. They do not like to think of dying; but when they do, they flatter themselves in their iniquity, and hope they shall do very well at last; they think they have good hearts, or that their good deeds will make amends for their bad ones; or that they shall have time to repent and make their peace with God, receive the sacrament, and get the priest's passport to heaven. O vain delusive hopes! Such men generally die as they live; and "what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" These foolish hopes, not being founded on the word of God, are like a house built upon the sand; and when the rain shall descend, the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon the house, down it must fall, and great will be the fall of it.

Only "the pure in heart shall see God." How can the profane man, who blasphemes his Maker every day, and with almost every breath calls for damnation, expect to meet God with safety? How can the unclean, the whoremonger, the adulterer, or the lascivious, expect to be admitted into the presence of a pure and holy God? How can the Sabbath-breaker imagine he shall be permitted to keep perpetual Sabbath in heaven, who could not endure the work of a short Sabbath once a week on earth? Shall the wilfully ignorant dream of a share in the inheritance of the saints in light?—the dishonest man think to rank with the righteous?—the self-righteous person, with those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb? Alas! all such hopes will be disappointed—"their hope shall be cut off, and their trust shall be as the spider's web."

What then is it to be ready for death? In what does a real preparation for it consist?

1. The foundation of the whole is, *an interest in Christ*, "Blessed are the dead who die *in the Lord*." Sin and death came by Adam; righteousness and life come by Christ. "By one man sin entered into the

the world; and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned.”—
 “Through the offence of one many are dead; yea, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” Now, as our being in *Adam* is the cause of death, being in *Christ* is the cause of life. Our union with the first man has subjected us to sin, misery, death, and hell; union with the second can alone afford us righteousness, happiness, life, and glory. “I am,” said Jesus, “the life.—I am come that they may have life; and he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.”

There is no security against the fatal consequences of death, but by believing in Jesus. The soul that is truly convinced of sin, that sees its danger, that is sensible of its helplessness, that is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, will fly for refuge to him, will trust alone in his perfect righteousness; and in doing so is secure. “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” This, therefore, was the summit of St. Paul’s wish—“that I may be found in him;” that is, as he explains it, not having on his own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ, by faith. Phil. iii. 8. He saw that his own righteousness was insufficient. In the days of his ignorance he trusted to it; but, being taught of God, he discarded it; he despised it, as to the thought of appearing in it, or being justified by it. He now longs to be found in Christ; that is, in his righteousness:—to be found in it, as a safe refuge, in which the avenger of blood cannot reach him—to be found in it, as the wedding-garment, in which the master of the feast would accept him. There is no living happily, nor dying safely, but as we are in Christ; and some who have vainly trusted in their own works, in the secure hour of prosperity, have wisely
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thought better of it when they came to die, and confessed "it was safer to trust to the righteousness of Christ."

If we are united to Christ, and are interested in his righteousness, death cannot hurt us; it is like a serpent that has lost its sting. So the apostle beautifully speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 56. "The sting of death is *sin*, and the strength of sin is the *law*; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Death is compared to a venomous serpent, that pierces and poisons. Sin is the sting of this deadly serpent. It is sin that makes death so terrible to nature: were it not for sin, death would be of little consequence, considering what a vain and vexatious world this is. And the strength of sin is the *law*—that which gives such a formidable power to sin, whereby it subjects us to the death of the body, and to everlasting misery, is the holy and righteous law of God, armed with its fearful curse, and binding the sinner under the guilt of his sin to the destruction of both body and soul. But thanks be to God, Jesus Christ has taken away the sins of his people by the sacrifice of himself; redeemed us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us; and thus he hath deprived death of its sting. "Death shut its sting into our Saviour's side; there left it; there lost it."

This is the true and only foundation of our preparation for death. It is sin that makes death terrible; but Christ hath taken away sin, and so taken away the sting of death. If, therefore, we believe in him, death cannot hurt us; for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," the gospel having freed them from the law of sin and death. "He that hath the Son hath life," "he shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life."

How much to be pitied are those poor ignorant creatures, who, in the prospect of death, comfort themselves with the thoughts of having done no
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harm; having paid every one his own; having been good livers; having kept church and sacrament; and having been good to the poor, and so on. All these are refuges of lies, and will leave the sinner exposed to the curse of the law, and to the sting of death. As no man can keep the law, no man can be saved by the law. Only Christ our Surety could keep the law perfectly; he did so; and by so doing, has "brought in an everlasting righteousness, which is to and upon all who believe." Blessed then are they, and they only, who die in the Lord! *To be in Christ*, then, is the ground-work of our readiness for death; to have *Christ in us*, by his Spirit, sanctifying our nature, is equally necessary: and these blessings are always connected. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

2. We cannot be prepared for death unless we are prepared for heaven; and no man is prepared for heaven but by the Holy Ghost. Our Lord has most solemnly declared, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Natural men think little of heaven; they have little other notion of it than that it is not hell. But if they had any just conception of that holy and happy state, their reason would convince them, that without an inward change they could never attain or enjoy it. Heaven would be a burthen to a graceless soul. As well might a swine that wallows in filthy mire, be delighted with the splendors of a palace; or a stupid ass be enchanted with the harmony of a concert, as a sensual carnal man be satisfied with the joys of the heavenly world. There must be a new heart, a new nature, and new affections, or there can be no relish for a better world. The more any thing, or person, on earth, is like heaven, the more the sinner hates it; and, the more resemblance it bears to hell, the more he loves it. His carnality of soul, his love of sensual pleasures, with all the

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wicked passions of his mind, are daily fitting him for another place, and another sort of company. He is treasuring up food for the worm that never dies, and fuel for the fire that shall never be quenched.

But, by regenerating grace, the believer is formed for glory. God has given a new bias to his affections. He sees the evil of sin, and sincerely hates it. He sees the beauty of holiness, and ardently desires it. He sees the excellency of the dear Redeemer, and cordially loves him. He delights in the law of the Lord, after the inward man. He loves the truth, the day, the ordinances, the people of God. He sees the vanity of the world, and is, in some degree, weaned from it. He has a glimpse of the glory that shall be revealed, and longs to behold it; and in this experience he enjoys a foretaste of heaven. He is not altogether a stranger to the joys of that celestial place. "He who hath wrought us for the self same thing is God;" and this experience is a blessed earnest of the future possession. The believer's title to heaven is in the righteousness of Christ alone; but his fitness for it is by these gracious operations of the Holy Spirit; and he who enjoys them, in the greatest degree, is the person best prepared for the great change.

In these blessed dispositions consists the believer's *habitual* readiness for death; but it is usual also to speak of his *actual* readiness. Our Lord has illustrated the difference between habitual and actual preparation, by the similes employed in the context. "A house-keeper is habitually ready for the thief, when he has taken all proper measures to secure his habitation, by doors and bars and bolts; but he is actually ready, when he stands armed to oppose his entrance. So the faithful servant is habitually ready to serve his master at any hour of the day, in any work to which he may be called: he is actually ready for his Lord's return, when he keeps waking, with the light in his hand."

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The believer is actually ready for death, when the graces of the Spirit in his soul are in their lively exercise. When faith is strong, triumphing over doubt and uncertainty; when hope is firm, subduing painful fears; when love to God, and Christ, and heavenly things, is ardent; when he is actually employed in performing the proper duties of his station, or when calmly submitting to the afflicting hand of God; when he is guarding against excessive cares, or undue indulgence of the flesh; and especially when the thoughts of death become familiar and pleasant, and the views of glory bright and enchanting—then, with the world under his feet, heaven in his eye, and Christ in his arms, he may say with pious Simeon, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

APPLICATION.

How important is readiness for death! Remember, death will come at its appointed hour, whether you are ready or not: And O how often at an unexpected hour! Not seldom, death comes suddenly. How often do we hear of sudden deaths! How many go to bed well, and never rise more! or go out from home well, and never return!—Some are snatched away in the midst of their amusements, and others while engaged in their callings. How necessary then to be *always* ready, to be ready *now*. Delay in this case is dangerous indeed. Almost all men talk of preparing at some future time; when sickness shakes them over the grave, or when the Lord removes a relation or a neighbour, by some alarming stroke, they promise themselves they will repent and reform: but the impression soon dies away; the world, like the returning tide, fills their hearts with its cares and pleasures, and the writing on the sand is all erased.—“So dies in human hearts the thoughts of death.”

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But, O consider the unspeakably dreadful consequence of dying unprepared. We can die but once; and if we die in our sins we are lost, lost for ever! Once lost, lost for ever. There is no repentance in the grave, no pardon in the grave, no regeneration in the grave. *Now* then is the time; it may be the *only* time; certainly the best time.—It may be —Now or Never.

How happy is the life of that man who has “a good hope through grace;” “the full assurance of hope;” a solid, scriptural persuasion of his interest in Christ. He truly enjoys life; and he may smile at death. He may say with St. Paul, “for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”—While I live here, Christ is with me; when I die, I shall be with Christ. How contented and chearful may he be in the humblest lot, who knows that he is an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. O happy, happy, happy man! Do not you wish to be like him?

But what is your present course? If you are living in sin, gratifying the lusts of the flesh, and departing from the living God, you cannot have this assurance. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; and he walks not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. If you are living in sin, you cannot be happy.—You know you are not. You try to be happy by forgetting death; but you cannot forget it. The tolling of the bell, the sight of a funeral, or the news of another’s decease, will force the recollection of it, and it makes you miserable. You are like the man at a banquet, with a drawn sword hung over his head by a hair.—You cannot enjoy life for fear of death. O that you were wise! for religion is true wisdom. Forsake the foolish and live. Let the wicked forsake his way, and turn unto the Lord: Let him cry to God for the help of his Holy Spirit, without which no efforts of nature to get rid of sin will prove effectual; but with which, the strongest corruptions may

may be subdued, and the sinner prepared for death and heaven.

Let Christians remember their Lord's advice—"Be ye also ready, for ye know not the hour when your Lord cometh." Remember, even the "wise virgins" slumbered and slept. Guard against this slothful remper. Cannot ye watch one hour? Be sober; be vigilant. The Judge is at the door. Be diligent, believer in Jesus, and, like your Master, "work while it is called to-day; the night cometh, in which no man can work." Many have, on a dying-bed, repented of their negligence—none of their diligence. Now is the time for activity; there will be rest enough in the grave. And O, daily guard against every obstruction to actual readiness. Conform not to the world in its levities and vanities. Be much alone—be much with God. Make conscience of redeeming precious time, and employing all your talents for the glory of God, the welfare of your family, the church, and the world. In a word—die daily.

When God removes any one who is dear to us, what cordial consolation does it afford, if we have reason to believe he was ready for death. We must not sorrow as men without hope. The change is his great advantage. It would be selfish to wish him out of heaven, to reside again in this vale of tears. "We should scarcely dare to weep," said one, "if Christ had evidently taken the body along with the soul of our friend to heaven;" and why weep now? Absent from the body, he is present with the Lord; and though the body must see corruption, it shall not always be the prisoner of the grave. Jesus has engaged to raise it up at the last day, and to fashion it like his own glorious body. O let us prepare to follow our pious friends, favoured with an earlier call to glory; while we remain below, let us be active for God, and soon shall we join our kindred spirits before the throne, unite in the song of the redeemed, and "so be for ever with the Lord."

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